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THE CHILD IN ART









THE AGE OF INNOCENCE  
OF OLDS

# THE CHILD IN ART

BY

MARGARET BOYD CARPENTER

WITH FIFTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND EDITION

GINN AND COMPANY  
BOSTON

*First Published*  
*Second Edition*

*November 1906*  
*March 1907*

THE Author desires to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. George Allen, and the executors of the late Mr. Ruskin; Messrs. Seeley and Co.; Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co.; Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston and Co.; Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co.; and the Rev. Canon Beeching, for their kindness in allowing her to quote extracts from books which are their copyrights.

THE PALACE, RIPON

*August 15, 1906*

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# THE CHILD IN ART

## CHAPTER I

OUR subject is the Child in Art. The word Art conjures up the figure of Greece, mother of arts; and yet here we meet with disappointment. We behold heroes, gods, and goddesses, but we look in vain for the child. We realise what Mr. Ruskin calls ‘the singular defect in Greek art,’<sup>1</sup> namely, the absence of childhood. This ‘defect’ is common, not only to Greek art, but to all the early art of the Eastern world.

Such is the fact. Can it be that the explanation is, as has been suggested, that the art of an epoch is unconsciously the reflection of its religious beliefs?

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England* (1887).



All early art was largely influenced, if not wholly inspired, by the religious ideal of the nation which gave it birth, and from the artist's conception wrought in everlasting stone we may learn something of the spirit which led the ancient races of the East, once so powerful, to dare and do great things. In the same way, from a study of the religious philosophy of each we may perhaps divine the reason for the particular form which their art has taken. To attempt such a task, interesting as it would be, is beyond the range of our present study; but a single example is sufficient to show this. It is noticeable that the Hebrews, as a nation, have no art such as painting and sculpture. They are indeed both poetical and musical; their poetry proves that they took an intense delight in the beauties of nature; their buildings show a sense of the beautiful in architecture. But they were a nomadic race, and this in itself was sufficient to preclude the possibility of the free develop-

ment of art. Religion also exerted a restraining power: the command, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,' prohibited the pursuit of plastic art.

Sculpture, indeed, appears to have been the earliest form of art; and as every language has different dialects, so did sculpture, the language of form, assume different characteristics according to the spirit and nature—shall we say, the spiritual nature?—of the nation to which the artist belonged. While to the Jews the representation of God in any form was forbidden, the other important Eastern races, notably the Egyptians, held it a sin to represent a god in any but a symbolic form. The Egyptians and Assyrians (like the Greeks and Romans) believed in a hierarchy of gods, some greater, some lesser in power, but all incontestably greater than men; and as such were they represented. Colossal monuments and huge statues were erected in their honour, in the form symbolic of each particular god, and adorned

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with hieroglyphics typical of their individual attributes and powers. Not till a later age were the gods represented in human form; though 'a great step was made,' as Edgar Quinet remarks, 'when the human head was substituted for that of an animal in the statues of the gods.' So we need hardly be surprised that in early Egyptian and Assyrian art, the representation of womanhood was rare, and that of childhood almost unknown; the only notable example of the latter being that of the infant Horus, child of Isis and Osiris, and analogous to the Greek Apollo.

Even the more human ideal of the Greeks did not bring the child into prominence. At its very earliest Greek art is in essence the same as the monuments of Egypt and Assyria, but in course of time their ideal changed; the yearning after truth allied itself with and finally lost itself in, the desire for ideal beauty, and it is rather as a manifestation of the latter that we most commonly regard the

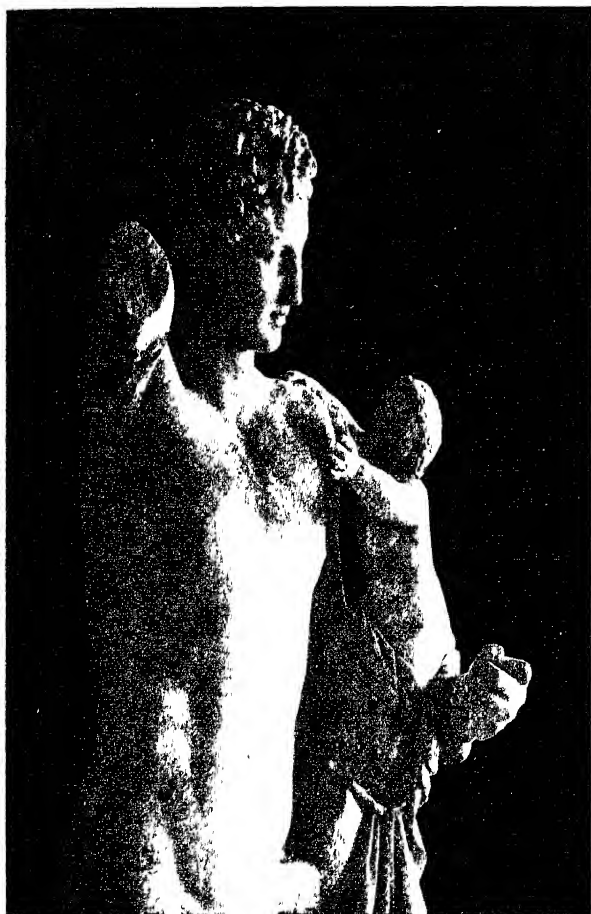
lovely specimens of sculpture that have survived the rise and fall of empires. The Greeks carried their love of the beautiful to such an extreme that from saying that everything good was beautiful, they went on to hold that everything beautiful was good; they worshipped the beautiful for its own sake, not for what it represented. In an age when kingdoms were gained, held, and governed by the might of the sword, though they thought of the beauty of humanity, they did not consider it merely as beautiful in tenderness and grace. The ideal beauty for which the Greeks strove was the perfection of intellectual culture and physical development. How, then, should the undeveloped forms of childhood find a place in Greek art, which dealt only with the beauty of strength and perfected maturity? Their ideal was an intellectual, not a spiritual one, and we cannot help realising this, even when looking at the most beautiful of Greek statues. It only needs breath

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to make it live, but we feel that, could we give it life, it would wander from end to end of creation, looking for what it has lost—its soul. Perhaps it is just this which constitutes their undying charm—the lack of soul, and yet the longing for it most vividly expressed—yet it makes us wonder what was amiss with Greece that she never found what she so earnestly sought.

‘It is,’ says Ruskin, ‘the singular defect in Greek art, that it never gives you any conception of Greek children,’<sup>1</sup> and whatever the reason for this omission, it is certainly most noticeable. One or two isolated exceptions occur to our memories; the statue of Hermes and the infant Dionysos, of which there are casts both in the British Museum and at South Kensington (Plate I.); the statue of Eirene carrying the baby Ploutos; and perhaps one or two statues of boys nearing manhood. In Roman art we are confronted

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England* (1887).



HERMES AND DIONYSOS



by the same remarkable fact. Pagan Rome borrowed her art from Greece; she borrowed Greek forms, but, lacking the spirit in which they were conceived, she failed to inspire them with life. The Romans were a more brutal nation, fitted to undertake and fulfil military enterprises, to found and govern empires, and in their hands art deteriorated with great rapidity. The inexorableness of their laws and the servile homage paid to their rulers were as little likely to promote the child to a conspicuous place in their art as the ideal of the Greeks.

Childhood, indeed, might be an unknown period in Greek civilisation, but for one child, who, both in myths and arts, is always a child, and who may, from his appearance in every age of art, be said to hold the secret of perpetual youth. Eros, or Cupid, as he is perhaps better known to us—an inconsistent, happy, frolicsome babe—is to be seen in statuary, wall-paintings, bas-reliefs, friezes, on Greek and Roman



vases ; everywhere in fact, where he could find a space in which to sport or a nook in which to rest (Plate II.). Such a hold had he on the fancies of the Pagan mind that we find him, either solitary or among myriads of his fellows, in whichever direction we may chance to turn. Sometimes armed with bow and arrows ; sometimes in attendance on gods and goddesses ; sporting with nymphs on the margins of silvery fountains ; flying at will through the air ; from the best period of Greek art to its decline, he holds his own. Bequeathed to Roman artists, he reigns there with equal security ; and though not conspicuous during the period when early Christian art came to the fore, at the dawn of the Renaissance he returns to his former popularity.

But is he really a child ? Nay, rather ‘an immortal type of the imagination under the likeness of a child.’

And why should the Greeks have chosen a child figure for the impersonation of Love ? Was it the helpless inconsistency,



BRONZE 'EROS'



the clinging tenderness, the timid boldness of childhood that appealed to them as symbolic of Love? was it because, like Love, a child finds an entrance everywhere, sitting enthroned in the hearts of all? The door of no heart can bar out Love, and at the touch of a child's hand the most rusty key will turn.

With the exception, then, of Eros, we have found no children in Pagan art. Mr. Ruskin has drawn our attention to the fact that the art of Greece never gives us any conception of Greek children. 'But,' he continues, 'from the moment when the spirit of Christianity had been entirely interpreted to the Western races, the sanctity of womanhood worshipped in the Madonna, and the sanctity of childhood in unity with that of Christ, became the light of every honest hearth, and the joy of every pure and chastened soul.'<sup>1</sup>

To trace this will be our endeavour in the succeeding chapters.

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England* (1887).

## CHAPTER II

WE have noticed the lack of children in Pagan art; we must now turn to that which received its impetus from the spread of Christianity. Simultaneous with the decline of Greek and Roman art was the rise of the faith which was to work such a miracle in the history of art, and raise it from the level to which it had sunk.

In the catacombs we shall find the earliest examples of Christian art. As we should expect, they are sacred in character, scenes from the Old and New Testaments being depicted on the walls. The persecutions which the professors of Christianity had so long endured must naturally have coloured their choice of subjects, and it is remarkable that those most frequently

selected were from the Old Testament, while the scenes from the life of our Saviour represent him not as a child, but as a healer, a worker of miracles, and even more frequently as the Good Shepherd. Upon the sufferings of his life they did not dwell.

With the conversion of Constantine this art was lifted into a more congenial atmosphere. For several centuries Byzantium, or Constantinople as we now know it, was the chief centre of learning, and there the distinct style of art called Byzantine was sedulously cultivated. Though different in spirit, and, to a certain extent, in expression, from the older and Pagan forms of art, it owed its peculiar character in a large measure to the Eastern art that had preceded it. Whereas the art of the catacombs had always represented the Christ as in the prime of life, with the cultivation of Byzantine art it became more common to paint him as a child, the Child of promise and prophecy in whom is built up all the hope of our faith.

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But this art, whose roots had been fostered and developed underground, and whose shoots gave signs of such promise, was destined to be checked by a sudden frost—the frost of ecclesiastical interference. The Church, it is true, sanctioned as fit, subjects which the Christians had hitherto shrunk from painting, such as the passion and crucifixion of our Lord, the tortures and martyrdoms of saints, but any benefit which may have been likely to accrue from this was speedily quenched by the severe control exercised by the Church. The mode of representing the Virgin and Child was fixed according to rule, and a distinct type of features was assigned to her. To paint the Child according to nature would have been the height of irreverence, and in general he is represented as a perfectly proportioned, but small, man. (See Margaritone's 'Madonna and Child,' page 14).

So, under the tyranny of ecclesiastical decrees, art lost its freedom. Since the

Church decreed that art should be conventional, it became no longer necessary, or even advisable, to study nature. Artists degenerated into mechanical workmen, whose only necessary qualifications were technical skill and a capacity for exact and slavish imitation. Countless reproductions of the same type were turned out without effort; objects designed for adoration, yet destined inevitably from mere force of repetition to breed and foster superstition among the masses. The proof of this is to be seen in Russia to-day, where sacred art is at the same stage as it was in the days of Justinian. Even in Naples, where we might have expected a higher ideal, the common people maintain a marked preference for a Madonna of the Byzantine type. 'The fidelity to fixed types, to few and dominating conceptions, is a characteristic common to all religions,' says a French writer,<sup>1</sup> and however we may take exception to this

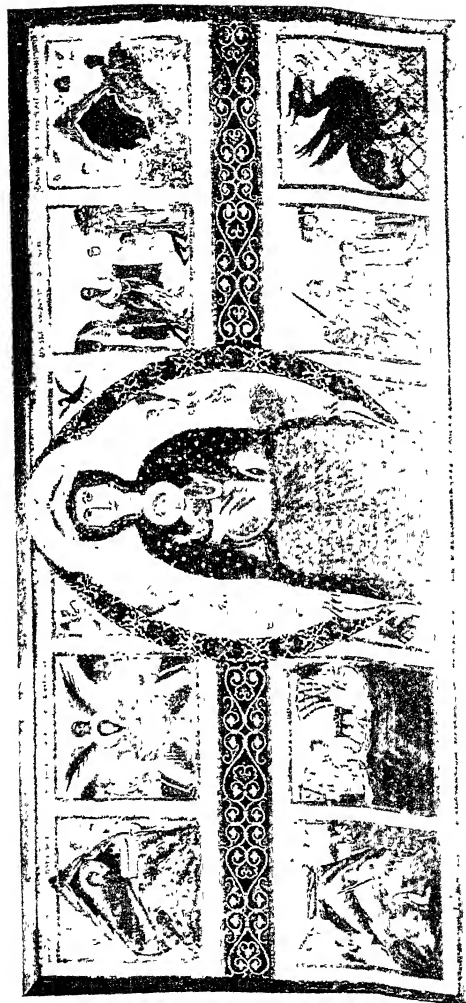
<sup>1</sup> U. Bayet, *L'Art Byzantin*, p. 105.



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statement, it is truly applicable to that stunted form of belief, falsely called Christianity, which inspired the Byzantine ideal.

But the darkest hour is always that which immediately precedes the dawn, and the division of the Churches was the signal for the parting of the clouds which hung gloomily about the prison of art. The Greek and Latin Churches went their several ways. The state of art in Russia shows what amount of progress was made by the one; from the other, the tiny germ of life has grown into a tree, the branches of which have filled the land, first of Italy, and then of the whole of Western Europe. Not at once, however, did this greater freedom exalt the child to general notice. The doctrines of the Latin Church insisted on an anthropomorphic conception of God, a being to be approached through intermediary forces; it also laid great stress on individual and personal responsibility. Therefore, though indirectly affecting childhood, by affecting the conditions



MADONNA AND CHILD  
MARGARET



of family life, it had in reality very little in common with the child nature. The time was not yet when the Holy Child should be depicted as a real child, human yet divine, instead of merely a type of awe-inspiring divinity.

To free itself entirely from the paralyzing fetters of the old traditions was the work of years; Byzantine influence died hard, and until the thirteenth century Italian art was more or less under its tyranny. An example of this is the picture by Margaritone, here reproduced (Plate III.). This artist—sculptor, painter, and architect—died an old and heart-broken man, ‘because he had outlived the ideals of his youth, and saw them superseded by new methods which overleapt the sacred barriers of traditionalism.’ His picture of the ‘Madonna and Child,’ which hangs in the vestibule at the National Gallery, should excite a deeper interest than is usually bestowed upon it by the average visitor. Compared with the exquisite creations of

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the Renaissance which hang in the rooms beyond, it may seem lifeless and soulless in its exact formal lines and stiff, unnatural attitudes; yet it is one of the stepping-stones to the great productions of Perugino, Raphael, Da Vinci, Bellini, and the rest, and by a careful study of its peculiarities, we shall the more appreciate those paintings which are already dear to us.

This picture is really a series of pictures, and consists of several panels. The outer ones, representing scenes from the lives of the saints, show signs of age, being somewhat faded and partly obliterated. The central panel is what chiefly interests us. The Virgin is seated on a throne, dressed in a rich robe, her head encircled with *fleurs-de-lys*, her eyes fixed, her attitude betokening indifference to the Child on her knee. Surrounded by formal draperies, his hand raised in the act of blessing, his whole bearing stiff and unnatural, his countenance forbidding; can we call this

a child? The whole picture is to our modern minds unreal, but we must remember it was meant to teach rather than to please. The stern face and forbidding aspect of the Virgin were meant to convey to the uneducated mass of the people the fact that she was the Mother of God; the broad halo surrounding the Child's head, the roll of the book in his hand, the formal rigidity of his attitude, were tokens of his divinity; he was in essence the Son of God. The thought of Christ as man had not occurred to the artist; or, if it had, was put aside as an irreverence.

This picture was painted in the thirteenth century, and shows us the professed style of Byzantine art. We can only wonder at the extraordinary tenacity with which it clings to life in the Eastern Church to this day.

### CHAPTER III

‘There is a day in Spring  
When under all the earth the secret germs  
Begin to stir and glow before they bud.  
The wealth and festal growth of midsummer  
Lies in the heart of that inglorious hour  
Which no man names with blessing, though its work  
Is blessed by all the world. Such days there are  
In the slow history of the growth of souls.’

AND this might equally be said of art. It would be very difficult to assign a definite date to the earliest beginning of the Renaissance. Doubtless many men, whose names have long been forgotten, played quite as important a part in the initiation of the great reform, as those we reverence as emancipators of art from the tyranny of the type.

Cimabue is generally spoken of as the evangelist of freedom; but his honours

must be shared with many forgotten artists, and more particularly with Niccolo Pisano, for the first link of the chain of traditionalism had been broken by sculpture. Till a later age, sculpture and painting went hand in hand, sculpture ever the more daring in breaking fresh ground, and starting fresh tracks; but it was long before inspiration was found in Nature. Slavish copying had gone on for so long that not only had the powers of drawing nature been lost, but also that of perception; till to the Byzantine artist the gorgeous and the tender tints of earth and sky had no meaning. He read the book of nature in an edition, an expurgated edition, of his own, which told him that the sky was gold, not with the rays of the sunset, but merely as a fitting background for the Virgin and Child. In the same way, he was blind to the wonderful sanctity of childhood. He painted a figure which he called the infant Christ, but he did not paint the child. His faith



did not embrace the thought that Christ became a real and human child for the express purpose of showing the world that a little child is the one being on earth who most nearly approaches a divine ideal. His memory did not travel back to the many occasions when a little child had formed the text on which the teaching of the Christ was based.

Contrast Cimabue's picture of the Madonna and Child (Plate iv.) with that by Margaritone. It is true the attitudes are stiff; it is not, however, the attitudes or even the composition of the picture which mark the change so definitely, but rather the quality of expression. Margaritone's Madonna and Child had no expression, and the very lack of it made them appear gaunt and forbidding; compared with Cimabue's they were mere motionless lay figures. But these figures might have been studied in life, for though drawn according to Byzantine methods, there is an element of thought introduced, which is



MARY AND CHILD

1511-1512



entirely absent from Margaritone's picture. The Virgin, whose dark robes give rather a gloomy aspect to the picture, holds the Child in her arms; her face is full of a majestic sadness, and far more tender than would have been approved by any Byzantine artist. The Child is still a man in miniature, but the expression of his face, though serious, is more natural and pleasing. The attendant angels, each with a broad halo, gaze at the mother and child with a loving reverence which is quite clearly expressed in their attitudes and features.

There is a certain resemblance in this picture to another Madonna and Child painted by Cimabue for the Rucellai Chapel of Santa Maria Novella at Florence, where it still hangs. Its reception by the people proves what a marked advance Cimabue had made on the work of earlier artists. We are told by Vasari, a Florentine, and therefore the artist's fellow-countryman, that the picture 'was an object of so much admiration to the people

of that day—they having then never seen anything better—that it was carried in solemn procession, with the sound of trumpets and other festal demonstrations, from the house of Cimabue to the church, he himself being highly rewarded and honoured for it.’

Our next illustration (Plate v.) is reproduced from a picture painted by Duccio di Buoninsegna, Cimabue’s contemporary, though about twenty years his junior. In his painting of childhood Duccio was superior to all the artists of his day. He is represented in the National Gallery by four pictures, one of which is of the Virgin and Child. We may call this the first picture in which the relationship of mother and child is expressed. In Margaritone’s, and even Cimabue’s, the Virgin does not exhibit any great devotion to her child; nor is the child apparently conscious that it is his mother who holds him. Both are separate entities, neither dependent on the other, except in so far as the dignity of the



MADONNA AND CHILD

DUCCIO



Virgin may be said to be derived from the Child. But in this Madonna of Duccio we see a motherly tenderness rarely surpassed by even the greatest artists of later times ; she bends her head towards the Child with a look of love that is also adoration. In the Child's manner there is a kind of sweet obtrusiveness ; heedless of the adoring angels above and around, he refuses to be ignored by his mother, and draws aside her veil that he may look the more closely into her face. How far more childlike than the unnatural infant of Margaritone, and even the more animated babe of Cimabue. It is unfortunate that the ravages of time and injudicious cleaning should have rendered the green ground-tint clearly visible, but the expression of the two chief faces is in no way impaired by this ; and we find in this picture almost the first signs that the artist appreciated the humanity as well as the divinity of the infant Christ.

This message was carried to a climax by a pupil of Cimabue, Giotto, whose fame



rapidly obscured that of his master, as Dante in his *Purgatorio* reminds us. The boy, who was the son of Bondone, a peasant, had been set to watch sheep, when he was found by Cimabue to be sketching one of his flock upon a stone. The painter, astonished at the talent shown by these amateur attempts of a boy of ten, took him to Florence, and educated him to an artistic career. The promise of early youth was fulfilled, and by the age of thirty Giotto had attained such fame that he was invited to assist in the decoration of the Basilica of St. Peter's, Rome. The messenger sent by the Pope asked for some proof of Giotto's skill. The artist, taking a brush full of colour, drew, with one sweep of the wrist, a perfect circle as sufficient evidence of his capabilities.

In his frescoes in the Arena Chapel at Padua, we have interesting examples of his treatment of childhood. The frescoes, thirty-eight in number, represent scenes from the lives of the Virgin and her

parents, episodes in the infancy of Christ, terminating with the finding of him in the Temple. Three are specially interesting to us.

‘The Presentation of the Virgin.’ The historian relates how at the age of three she was taken by her parents to the Temple to be dedicated to the service of God. They set her down at the lowest of the Temple steps, when to the amazement of all beholders, she ascended them without any assistance. Giotto has portrayed the Virgin as a dwarf woman; why, is not quite clear, since two other frescoes give proof that he was capable of painting children.

In ‘The Presentation of Christ in the Temple’ we may see that Giotto had at any rate studied nature and done his best to draw what he saw. The Virgin has placed the Child in the arms of Simeon; but, babylike, he resents the change from the firm, soft support of his mother’s arms to the unaccustomed embrace of a stranger; he longs and even struggles to return to

her, quite unlike the contented child in the picture of the same scene by Gaddi, one of Giotto's school; this baby, in spite of his mother's outstretched arms, seems quite happy with the old man whose words of blessing are as acceptable to him as the Madonna's caressing tones.

'The Massacre of the Innocents' is the last of the trio we have chosen to glance at. The slain children are thrown in a heap; the mothers stand in groups, some lifting appealing hands to Herod who watches the scene from a balcony, some clasping their little ones in a vain attempt to save them from a barbarous death. The effect of these actions is to lessen the impression of petrified horror, which, by intensifying the expressions of grief, would be imparted to the composition. Undoubtedly, Giotto's influence did much for the naturalisation of childhood in art. He noticed the unstudied and graceful attitudes of a child, and tried to reproduce them in his pictures; though modern critics

may find many faults in line and composition. We have also another cause for gratitude. Not only did Giotto see the natural form as distinguished from the accepted or traditional form, but he created a revolution in colouring. The Byzantine artist had maintained a strict adherence to his symbolic scheme of colours; but Giotto saw with his own eyes the colours of nature, and perhaps realised that they represented a far higher symbolism in that they had been painted by the hand of God. 'Suddenly, Giotto threw aside all the glitter and all the conventionalism; and declared that he saw the sky blue, the table-cloth white, and angels when he dreamed of them, rosy. And he simply founded the schools of colour in Italy—Venetian and all. . . . And what is more, nobody discovered much about colour after him.'<sup>1</sup>

Of Giotto's immediate successors, Andrea Orcagna is perhaps the most celebrated.

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*. New York, 1886, p. 27.

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In one of his wall pictures in the Campo Santo at Pisa, 'The Triumph of Death,' we notice a use of the child form often favoured by the old masters. The picture is more impressive than many sermons, representing a crowd of merry-makers, the rich and well-to-do of this world, surrounded by all the joys of life, with Cupids hovering here and there about them. Towards this group sweeps the figure of Death, a ghastly and horrible female, with attendant angels and demons. She ignores a group of crippled beggars, who lift imploring hands, as if pleading for release from life, and passes on to those full of health and strength. As she mows them down with her scythe, their souls float upwards in the shapes of new-born infants, to be dragged by demons to the mouth of a volcano, or transported by angels to a celestial country. In later pictures of the Renaissance myriads of tiny cherubs are frequently to be found, to which the same significance may be attached. Hogarth calls it the most extra-

ordinary of all art's chimeras, yet says that 'a painter's heaven would be nothing without swarms of these little inconsistent objects, flying about, or perching on the clouds; and yet there is something so agreeable in their form that the eye is reconciled and overlooks the absurdity, and we find them in the painting and carving of every church. St. Paul's is full of them.'

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## CHAPTER IV

A PAINTER of saints,' it has been said, 'should be a saint himself.' In other words, since a man's character is always reflected in his art, his aims should be high, his thoughts pure, his whole life true to a noble ideal, if he would set forth on his canvas a worthy expression of the highest and holiest. We must remember that in the Middle Ages education was the privilege of the few, and in default of books, pictures were the means by which the Church impressed on the mass of the people the majesty and dignity of the Christ, loading the child-form with gold and rich draperies as befitting the King of kings. The paintings of the Renaissance, inspired as they were by a truer conception

of Christ, taught men to understand better the mystery of the relationship between God and man. So the artists who painted from the highest motives, infusing into their work all they knew of the divine, preached in their pictures more eloquent sermons than many spoken from the pulpit.

Such a man was Fra Angelico, a gentle and loving soul, childlike in his simplicity, living on earth in a heaven created by his own angelic character. His soul was mirrored in his art; all his paintings being characterised by the same sweetness and devotion that distinguished him in life. His picture of the Madonna and Child in the Monastery of San Marco, Venice, sometimes spoken of as the 'Madonna of the Star,' shows the influence of Fra Angelico's religious life. All that the loving and reverent imagination of the painter could conceive as fitting for the Mother of his Saviour is in this picture. The Virgin, with the Child in her arms, stands encircled by a radiant aureole, which is surmounted



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by a golden crown, and further surrounded by a framework of stars. The Virgin is emphatically Queen of Heaven, yet in spite of the majesty of her appearance, her face is transparently tender, and the Child nestles down on her shoulder with a caressing gesture of his little hand; how much more likely is this to inspire feelings of love and reverence in the hearts of men than the harsh symbolism of the Byzantine creed! The Child is just a tender human baby, idealised and glorified by the devout prayers of the artist, who in his simple faith believed his pencil to be inspired by a higher Power than himself, and refused to alter his pictures in any way.

Of different genius was Fra Filippo Lippi. Like Fra Angelico he was a monk, and painted religious pictures, but lacked the childlike simplicity of heart which shone out through the work of Angelico. In Florence are two of his best-known works; one in the Academy of Arts, the other in the Uffizi Gallery. The former,



MADONNA AND CHILD

BOTTICELLI



a picture of the Coronation of the Virgin, has in the foreground two very pretty little children, one of whom gazes with rapt admiration at a beautiful girl before whom they kneel, while the other looks straight out of the picture at the spectator. The picture in the Uffizi is a group of the Madonna adoring the Child, supported by two youthful angels; the angel in the foreground wears a sweet expression, but the features of all seem to be lacking in refinement.

Lippi's pupil, Botticelli, whose early style was probably influenced by that of his master, may fall under the same censure so far as the Child in the picture we reproduce is concerned (Plate VI.). This picture, which hangs on a low screen in the National Gallery (No. 275) is perhaps the best known of those ascribed to Botticelli. It does, indeed, more than justify its popularity. Yet not for the Child do we admire it; indeed, we can but hope that this almost deformed baby was painted by one

of Botticelli's pupils, and not by the master himself. It will not bear comparison with the other figures in the composition, nor with the children in Botticelli's other works, and it is inconceivable that the mind which created and the hand that painted the beautiful Virgin should be identical with those which designed and executed the Child. Its head is monstrously out of proportion; its features are ugly; the body is badly and incorrectly drawn, and there is no expression of life. St. John and the angel attendant, though not exactly children, attract us more. Some awful calamity seems to have fallen on the little group, and these lovely faces are full of sympathy with the Virgin, who seems an embodiment of frozen grief; she has forgotten the Child she is nursing, and hears only the echo of the words, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also.'

Doubt has been expressed as to the genuineness of this picture, but there are others from which we can judge of Botti-

celli's treatment of childhood. The 'Holy Family' in the Louvre, or the 'Magnificat' in the Uffizi Gallery, show us what mastery he attained in the portrayal of the child. The baby in the Louvre is a confiding and graceful child nestling lovingly against his mother; and the half-wistful expression on the face of the little St. John, who stands by, is just what any child, too sweet-tempered for petty jealousy, might wear. In the Uffizi picture, the scene is no longer one of purely domestic bliss. The Child is an older child; his mother is about to write the Magnificat in a book that lies open on her knee, though her grave face belies the joyousness of that poem. Above her head two youthful angels hold a crown, to which the upturned gaze of the Child is directed. One hand rests on his mother's; the other grasps a ripe pomegranate—

'Which if cut deep down the middle,  
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined  
humanity.'

A grander picture, but not so sweet a child.

Some doubt exists with regard to the next picture we reproduce (Plate VII.). The catalogue of the National Gallery assigns it to the Florentine School; but connoisseurs have gone further and ascribed it to Pollajuolo, Verrocchio, and Ghirlandajo. Of these fifteenth-century painters Verrocchio's name is, by the majority of critics, attached to the picture. The reason for this is, that in Verrocchio's 'Baptism of Christ' one of the angels is said to have been painted by his pupil, Leonardo da Vinci; the story further runs that Verrocchio, seeing how greatly Leonardo surpassed him, never took pencil or brush in hand again. However this may be, the angel in the 'Baptism' bears a marked resemblance to one in this picture—that on the right; so we infer that, if not actually by Verrocchio, it is by one of the students most frequently with him. Furthermore, the Child is the



MADONNA AND CHILD

C. 1505





same type, though more refined, as the infants painted by Credi, said to be Verrocchio's favourite pupil. So it seems to be a composite picture, though with marked characteristics of the school of Verrocchio, who probably designed and executed part, leaving his pupils to complete it. But whoever the artist, it is undoubtedly a very beautiful picture. The child angels are exceedingly dainty, though somewhat inclined to pose; there is a touch of affectation about the hand of the angel on the left. The dimpled boy on the Virgin's lap is a very lovable baby, as he smiles up into his mother's face. In one tiny hand he holds a raspberry, while with the other he puts some of the seeds to his lips. The Virgin's face is of childlike simplicity: with the same sweetness which characterises the work of Perugino, she smiles down at the child and clasps her hands in adoration. Other charming studies of children by Verrocchio may be seen in the Louvre, where is

preserved a sheet of paper with five pen studies on one side and four on the reverse.

The school of Verrocchio was very much influenced by the achievements of sculpture; of which branch of art Donatello, and a few years later the Della Robbia family, were during the fifteenth century the principal exponents. They evidently loved children, for when Donatello began to work on the reliefs for the singing gallery in the Duomo at Florence, what subject should he choose for its decoration but the sweetest specimens of happy babyhood: and when Luca della Robbia was entrusted with the task of adorning a similar gallery for the organ he personified the spirit of harmony by groups of older children; some singing, some dancing. This was Della Robbia's first important work, and it is wonderfully lifelike. The choristers and young maidens are not merely standing with their mouths open in the attitude of song, but they are



PANEL FROM THE ORGAN GALLERY  
DELLA ROBBIA



singing; and so infectious is the joyous melody that some babies seated at the feet of the singers, though too tiny to join in the general harmony, wave their hands in time to the music. The simplicity of composition makes this an even more charming work than the gallery by Donatello. Casts of both may be seen at the South Kensington Museum; but both are unfortunately placed at an inconvenient height on the wall, making a close inspection wellnigh impossible. We reproduce a photograph of that by Luca della Robbia (Plate VIII.), and for a specimen of Donatello's work the bronze designed for the high altar of St. Antony's, Padua (Plate IX.). This is very lovely; representing twelve child angels of exceeding grace, and as natural as we can imagine an angel to be.

The glazed terra-cotta ware to which his name has been given is most generally known as representing Luca della Robbia's genius. In the South Kensington Museum

are no less than fifty specimens of his work of this kind ; but a bas-relief in the convent of San Marco at Florence shows his style at its best. Two lovely cherubs gaze down at the Child who lies on a grassy bank shadowed by a group of tall lilies ; the Virgin kneels before him, and he holds up a little hand to her with the most delightful air. The lovely medallions of infants at the Foundling Hospital of the same city are the work of Andrea, Luca's nephew.

In the same building is an altar-piece by Ghirlandajo, who is chiefly known as the master of Michael Angelo. This altar-piece is said to be his best work ; it depicts 'The Adoration of the Magi,' and shows one of the adoring kings reverently kissing the Child's foot. Two little children are presented by the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist on either side. Similar to this is the 'Adoration' in the Pitti Palace, where it is curious to notice the introduction of the Florentine costumes of that



BRONZE FROM THE HIGH ALTAR OF ST. ANTHONY'S, PADUA

DONATELLO





day ; they accord ill with the sacred scene, and show how much of the spirit which inspired the earlier painters of the Renaissance was lacking in Ghirlandajo's work. The fact that he took as models famous beauties was also significant.

Filippino Lippi, son of Fra Filippo Lippi, was only twelve when his father died, and his artistic education was carried on by Botticelli, from whom he acquired his style. One of his loveliest pictures is composed almost entirely of children. The scene is laid in a quiet garden, enclosed by a low balustrade, beyond which is a thick hedge covered with roses in full bloom. Through a row of stiff trees may be seen a fanciful landscape. In the midst of this peaceful spot is a group of beautiful child angels kneeling with the Virgin round the infant Christ. The Child lies on the ground amid a shower of roses which falls from the hands of one of the angels. In the foreground kneels the little St. John, who looks out of the

picture as if calling the spectator's attention to the happy laughing baby. With the joyousness of this scene we may contrast the picture painted by Filippino for the Rucellai family, but which hangs now in the National Gallery. It is singularly beautiful, and in its type reminds us somewhat of Botticelli's work. The Virgin's face is sweetly sad, and something of her melancholy is reflected in the Child. On either side is a saint: St. Jerome, an old man with tangled grey hair and beard, is adoring the Child; St. Dominic, bearing a lily in one hand, is absorbed in a book. Wild beasts retreat from this little group into a mountainous landscape behind.

Lorenzo di Credi, to whom we have already referred, made no very special mark as an artist; his pictures are remarkable for elaborate and exact finish, but not for any great individuality. A pupil of Verrocchio, his early works give proof of his acquaintance with Leonardo da

Vinci. His masterpiece, a painting of 'The Nativity,' is in the Academy of Arts at Florence. The Virgin and Joseph, together with some shepherds and angels, are grouped round the Child, who lies on the ground, not among grass and flowers, but on a wheat sheaf, symbolic perhaps of the words, 'I am the Bread of Life.' His hand is pointing towards his mouth, a gesture which was much favoured by the early masters as typical of Christ's saying, 'I am the Word.' There are in the National Gallery two pictures by Credi, which any one interested in the hybrid No. 296, reproduced a few pages back, would do well to study. No. 648 represents the Virgin adoring the infant Christ, who lies on the ground in front of her. The baby certainly is strikingly like the child in No. 296, but is comparatively clumsy and rather puffy. Credi's babies usually are. There is a monstrously exaggerated imitation of his style in the Dresden Gallery — a 'Holy Family.'

The Virgin has an insipidly pretty face; but the little St. John is staring at the child on her knee with his mouth wide open, his face expressive of nothing so much as sheer imbecility. The Child himself has apparently not a bone in his body, and is an ill-shapen bundle of fat, which falls into a series of tucks round him. His feet would never serve him for the purpose of locomotion; and his hands, particularly the right, which the Virgin holds with an air of tender pride, are more like claws. His face is in accordance with the rest of him and wears a look of blank stupidity. How any one could paint such a picture, and give it a sacred title, passes understanding. It is most probably the work of some Flemish artist in would-be imitation of Credi or Leonardo da Vinci, painted in a later age when the pendulum had swung so far in the direction of Realism that the painters of the child Christ forgot his divinity entirely, and reproduced merely the features of

the prettiest peasant child they could find. Even in the hands of some fifteenth-century artists we feel that the conception of the Virgin and Child was in danger of losing its dignity through an excessively realistic treatment. As their skill in colouring and composition grew, men aimed more at the production of a beautiful picture than the intensifying of the devotional spirit—an inevitable reaction on the part of art, which for so many centuries had been fettered by the restrictions imposed by the Church.

The production of a beautiful picture was what Leonardo da Vinci had in mind when he painted 'La Vierge aux Rochers' (Plate x.), whether he thought about a devotional spirit or not. There are two versions of the picture, one in the National Gallery, the other in the Louvre. Discussion regarding the originality of each has been rife, but with this we need not concern ourselves. There are some points of difference between them, and many critics

are of opinion that ours is the better picture. In spite of its eccentricities, or rather on account of them, it is very interesting. The whole scene is the product of Leonardo's vivid imagination; nothing like it was ever seen on earth. The rocks are, from a geological point of view, quite impossible, and the incongruity of the flowery carpet on such poor soil as the presence of the rocks would ordinarily indicate, strikes us immediately. The figures are characteristic of Leonardo's style.

The Christ child sits on the ground, supported by an angel; he raises his hand to bless the little St. John who kneels with joined hands on a rocky ledge in front of him. The Virgin has one hand on the shoulder of the kneeling Child, and the other raised above her Son's head; her face is illuminated by the slow mysterious smile peculiar to Leonardo. This smile seems indeed to illuminate the whole foreground of the picture; it is reflected in the angel's face, and, to a lesser



THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS  
DA VINCI





degree, in those of the children. But there is a curious unreality about the figures. They might be ghosts; the river in the background, seen through the opening in the rocks, might be the river of Death. In the Louvre picture the nimbi are absent, and the pretty theory has been set forth that into the valley of the shadow of Death the Virgin has brought the soul of a dead child to receive the blessing of the infant Christ. This appropriate interpretation of the picture has been given by D. G. Rossetti in a sonnet:—

‘ Mother, is this the darkness of the end,  
 The Shadow of Death? and is that outer sea  
 Infinite imminent Eternity?  
 And does the death-pang by man’s seed sustained  
 In Time’s each instant cause thy face to bend  
 Its silent prayer upon the Son, while he  
 Blesses the dead with his hand silently  
 To his long day which hours no more offend?  
 Mother of grace, the pass is difficult,  
 Keen as these rocks, and the bewildered souls  
 Throng it like echoes, blindly shuddering  
 through.  
 Thy name, O Lord, each spirit’s voice extols,  
 Whose peace abides in the dark avenue  
 Amid the bitterness of things occult.’

Leonardo's particular style helped to form that of his disciple, Beltraffio, who was a painter of small originality, but, like Credi, capable of giving great finish to his pictures, which were all on a small scale. No. 728, in the National Gallery, is considered his masterpiece, so we may judge of his capabilities. It represents the Virgin nursing the Child; she is seated in front of a green curtain sprinkled with gold ornaments, and dressed in a blue robe with an under tunic of red. This last is painted with such exquisite finish that it has the appearance of velvet. The Child is a fair curly-haired boy, whose sole garment is a broad band of some patterned material round his body. He has turned from his mother, and looks round as if something outside the picture had attracted his attention. Beltraffio has succeeded in giving us a natural baby, but on the whole it is unattractive.

Another painter whose early work was influenced by Da Vinci was Fra Barto-

lommeo. In his later years he made the acquaintance of Raphael, which resulted in an improvement of his style. His 'Enthronement of the Virgin' in the Uffizi, and the 'Madonna della Misericordia' in the Church of San Romano at Lucca, show his skill in painting child angels, who are grouped around the Virgin with wonderful grace. In the latter picture are two or three pretty little children.

From these charming conceptions of youth and infancy we must turn to the works of another school which came into prominence about the middle of the fifteenth century—that of Ferrara. In spite of its characteristics, decorativeness and attention to detail, it is not specially attractive. Its earliest representative of any note was Cosimo Tura, who certainly cannot be accused of idealising the children he painted. A specimen of his painting hangs in the National Gallery. 'The Virgin Enthroned' sits on a high throne, on the steps of which is a choir of angels

playing various instruments of music. Red and green are the predominating colours forced into rather surprising contrast. The Virgin's robe is of a peculiar shade of blue; and both she and the Child lack the charm so noticeable in other pictures of this period.

Hung close to the painting by Tura is another enthroned Madonna, by Ercole Grandi, whose ideal is far nobler. While Tura's picture is a study in garish contrasts of colour, Grandi's is full of a quiet harmony. The richly ornamented throne, full of most perfectly finished detail, does not distract, but rests the eye; and the beauty of the mother and child, once studied, will not readily be forgotten. The Child stands erect on the Virgin's knee in the traditional attitude of blessing, but there is an utter absence of self-consciousness in his pose, which is full of childish dignity.

Similar to this is Mantegna's conception of the infant Christ. Mantegna, the bright

and morning star of the Paduan school, is represented in the National Gallery by a picture of the Madonna and Child, with a saint on either side. In this, as in the 'Madonna della Vittoria' of the Louvre, the Child is dignified and stately in pose, but for beauty and grace, Grandi's child Christ is infinitely superior. The influence of sculpture on the Paduan school resulted in harmony of line and composition in Mantegna's pictures; and in that in the National Gallery may be noticed a wonderful colour effect in the draperies, reminding us of nothing so much as shot silk.

Opposite to Mantegna's 'Madonna and Child,' and in direct contrast, is another, by Crivelli—No. 788—a large altar-piece in several panels. The colour scheme somewhat reminds us of Tura's, but it is very much more subdued, in spite of the gold background; the exactness of outline is also similar to the work of the Ferrarese artist. The Madonna and Child are both lacking in beauty, yet about the Child

there is something indescribably appealing. Sitting on his mother's knee, with one little hand tightly clasping her middle finger, with the tired baby head, overcome with sleep, drooping forward over her wrist in the most uncomfortable attitude, it is one of the most pathetic babies in the whole range of Italian art. This represents so well the struggle that went on all through the fifteenth century; the struggle to unite in one the divinity and the humanity of the infant Christ.

Perhaps of the artists of this period, Bellini was the most successful in this; he has also bequeathed to subsequent ages some very lovely child angels. A choir of cherubs attends the Virgin and Child; a bevy of older children supports the body of the dead Christ. Among the saints attendant on the enthroned Madonna are small seraphs whose part it is to make music upon the lute or stringed instrument. Those in the Frari altar-piece at Venice are wholly absorbed in their occu-

pation. One plays a mandolin, to the tones of which he listens with great attention; the other, a lovely flower-crowned child, pipes joyfully upon a flute. The stately, though perfectly natural child on the Virgin's knee, pays no heed to their music; quite unlike the child of the San Zaccaria Madonna, whose interest on the attendant violinist is manifest. The melody drawn out by the angel's bow may well be inspired by the divine happiness of the mother and child. Nothing but an ecstasy of joy seems to radiate from this picture; and a similar sentiment is breathed in the music of the cherubs at the foot of the Frari Madonna.

But Bellini saw a vision of the Christ child in another mood, overshadowed by the mystery of pain, as if he read into the future, and felt already the pressure of the crown of thorns upon his baby brow. In this picture, known as the 'Madonna of the Pomegranate' (Plate XI.), the Virgin, robed in a mantle of blue, holds the child



on her right arm, while in her left hand is the symbolic pomegranate. The child's right hand is resting on this, while he gazes out of the picture with a wistful expression. Behind is a landscape partly shut off by a green curtain with a narrow red border. The loveliness of the picture baffles description ; perhaps its message is best expressed in the following lines :—

Years pass and change ; mother and child remain.  
 Mother so proudly sad, so sadly wise,  
 With perfect face and wonderful calm eyes,  
 Full of a mute expectancy of pain :  
 Child of whose love the mother seems so fain,  
 Looking far off, as if in other skies  
 He saw the hill of crucifixion rise,  
 And knew the horror and would not refrain. <sup>1</sup>

This passing glance at the Italian art of the fifteenth century will have shown us what a marked advance had been made on the Byzantine methods and treatment of the child. It will also have convinced us of the patient and earnest efforts made by the artists of this period to reach a

<sup>1</sup> *Love in Idleness* (1883).



MADONNA AND CHILD

GOTTI

higher ideal. We have traced the gradual growth from the unyielding symbolism of the Byzantine type to a more Christian and human conception of the child, and in our next chapter we shall follow this still further.

## CHAPTER V

**W**E have noticed the development of the imagination in the artists of the earlier years of the Renaissance, and seen how pathetic was their struggle 'to unite the attributes of Godhead with the truth of babyhood'; we have seen, too, how rarely they succeeded in the attempt to do this. None, save perhaps *Grandi* of the school of Ferrara, and *Bellini* of Venice, produced anything that was a child, real and yet divine. The others failed because they painted either a purely human baby, which, by reason of his traditional attitude and the traditional composition of the picture, was recognised as the child Christ; or they painted a mere effigy dressed up in gaudy draperies. The latter

conception, as we have seen, held its own for long, till it was pushed aside by the study of nature. Men began gradually to realise that childhood, painted in a spirit of reverence, was in itself, without the accessories prescribed by ecclesiastical custom, the nearest they could get to the divine. So, having thrown themselves heart and soul into the study of nature, and allowing their imagination a certain degree of liberty, they presented, as far as they were able, an ideally beautiful child; nothing less could adequately express the infant Saviour. Technical difficulties having been to a large extent overcome, the productions of each generation grew proportionately in grace and life, in colour and chiaroscuro. These delights of composition were more to many artists of this time than the expression of devout feeling; the feeling was there, but entirely subordinated to the technique of the picture. The older artists had made the Virgin and Child the prominent figures in their paintings: in the

pictures of this later time the whole harmony of the scene had to be considered, and a more perfect balance was secured.

Luca Signorelli, whose works influenced the mind of Michael Angelo, painted with this idea in view. Like Michael Angelo, he revelled in the representation of strong, powerful men and women, but failed utterly in painting children. They are all curiously ugly; the only example with any pretensions to the usual charm of babyhood is in his picture of the 'Circumcision' in the National Gallery, and even this child has been repainted. In the same room is a 'Coronation of the Virgin,' also by Signorelli. The cloud on which the Virgin stands is composed entirely of little cherub heads. These, in the hands of other sixteenth-century artists, would have been remarkable for daintiness and grace. Signorelli has evidently drawn them all from the same model, and that not chosen with a view to beauty.

Signorelli's entire devotion to his art is

well shown in the following lines by J. A. Symonds from a story told by Vasari:—

‘Vasari tells that Luca Signorelli,  
 The morning star of Michael Angelo,  
 Had but one son, a youth of seventeen summers,  
 Who died. . . .  
 Still Luca spoke and groaned not ; but he raised  
 The wonderful dead youth, and smoothed his hair,  
 Washed his red wounds, and laid him on a bed. . . .  
 Naked and beautiful. . . .  
 Then Luca seized his palette : hour by hour  
 Silence was in the room ; none durst approach :  
 Morn wore to noon, and noon to eve, when shyly  
 A little maid peeped in and saw the painter  
 Painting his dead son with unerring hand-stroke,  
 Firm and dry-eyed before the lordly canvas.’<sup>1</sup>

If we forget Signorelli when we speak of Michael Angelo, it is not possible to mention Raphael without our thoughts drifting to Perugino, to whose influence Raphael owed so much. The return to naturalism did not take effect so soon on the Umbrian school as on those of Florence and Northern Italy. Perugino is still emphatically a religious painter. Two ‘Holy Families’ in the Louvre, and an

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance*, iii. p. 281.

altar-piece in the National Gallery, represent his style well. His attitudes are still slightly conventional; there is a trace of mannerism about his figures; but his paintings are the most sincerely spiritual of his age. All seem steeped in an air of serenity; repose is the predominating characteristic. His Madonnas are pure and sweet, his children gentle and innocent. Like those of the saintly Fra Angelico, they are idealised morsels of humanity; it is through the holiness which glows in the face of the Madonna that we catch a glimpse of their divinity.

Something akin to the work of Perugino is that of Francia, whose pictures are equally devout and reverent in feeling. In the gallery of Munich is a Madonna and Child similar in treatment to one by Filippino Lippi. Separated from a quiet landscape by a rose-covered trellis, the Virgin stands before the Child in an attitude of profound humility. The little Christ lies on her outspread mantle bless-



ing her with his right hand. No crowd of little angels is round them ; even St. John is not one of the group. The Mother and Child are quite alone. The trellis of roses was a favourite introduction on the part of several painters, notably Botticelli. It is possibly an allusion to Dante's speaking of the Virgin as the Rose of Heaven. In the National Gallery are three pictures by Francia, one a large altar-piece representing the Madonna enthroned with St. Anne, and below them St. Paul and St. Sebastian on the left, St. Lawrence and St. Frediano on the right. At the foot of the throne stands the little St. John, bearing his cross of reeds, and a scroll on which are inscribed the words : ' Ecce Agnus Dei.' With the other hand he points upwards to the child Christ, who is seated on his mother's knee. St. Anne, whose face is particularly beautiful, offers the child a peach, symbolic perhaps of the fruits of the Spirit. Nothing could be more sweet than the two children. We feel that they are too good

for this world, but there is such a wonderful delicacy in the whole picture that the sensation is by no means out of place. In another enthroned Madonna by Francia, at Bologna, his native city, the Baptist is a grown man and stands beside the throne, while his place at the foot of it is taken by a charming little angel who is playing on a species of mandolin.

Francia's friend, Lorenzo Costa, must also come under our notice. The little angels in his pictures are always charming and childlike. In the National Gallery is a picture, evidently an altar-piece, where the angels are particularly lovely. Many artists introduced these little attendant seraphs into their pictures deeming it fitting that the child denizens of heaven should be those selected to sing the praises of their infant King. They either float in the clouds above his head, or hover on the canopy of his throne, sometimes singing in companies, sometimes dedicating to his service their skill in playing on instruments of

music. They, like Eros of the Greeks, are only immortal types under the likeness of children: child figures, who know no other or more childlike occupation than this; they sing and play with perfect certainty; we cannot well imagine them otherwise employed. Yet by no means are the feelings they exhibit all similar. In Mr. Ruskin's words: 'A choir of singing angels by La Robbin or Donatello would be intent on their music, or eagerly rapturous in it, as in temporary exertion: in the little choirs of cherubs by Luini in the Adoration of the Shepherds, in the Cathedral of Como, we even feel, by their dutiful anxiety, that there might be danger of a false note if they were less attentive. But Bellini's angels, even the youngest, sing as calmly as the Fates weave.'<sup>1</sup>

The cherub inhabitants of the celestial regions were in the hands of fifteenth and sixteenth century artists very differently

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *On the Relations between Michael Angelo and Titian*, p. 15

treated. The idea that wings answered the same purpose for angels as they did for birds was long in taking root. It was manifest that a human being could not stand unsupported in mid-air; and, so must have argued the earlier painters, any being in human form would look unnatural in such a position, even in a picture. Therefore, to give an appearance of reality, when occasion demanded the presence of cherubim and seraphim, a selected few were painted; the grown-up angels standing on little strips of clouds, and the baby cherubs tucked into larger masses of cloud, with only their heads and shoulders peeping out. This was the best that the fifteenth-century artists could do to suggest the presence of the hosts of heaven.

Raphael was the first to make a change. Hanging in the Vatican, close to Perugino's 'Resurrection,' which was painted in the old style, is Raphael's 'Assumption of the Virgin.' This was painted in the early days of his career, and we can see in

it the influence of the master hand in hand with the pupil's own individuality. Yet Raphael's notion is that the entire company of heaven would be present at any important event, such as this, not only a few selected cherubs; so he paints along the cloud whereon the Virgin sits youthful angels and smaller cherubs, and above their heads the sky is sprinkled with other baby heads, which Hogarth speaks of rather contemptuously as being the most absurd of artistic chimeras. This is much better than the isolated saints and seraphs who attended the Virgin in similar pictures by earlier artists, but were felt by Raphael to be inadequate.

In another room in the Vatican is a large fresco, entitled the 'Glorification of the Christian Faith,' where he improves on his treatment of angels. 'These persons,' says a modern writer describing this picture, 'have not come down out of heaven to rest on a scaffolding of clouds, but rather, behind the clouds, the heavens have

opened, and the eternally present—to Raphael—is for the moment made visible. Then as to the clouds themselves, are they indeed clouds? one asks as one continues to gaze, or is what we see rather a mist of angelic movement taking the form of clouds? For here, his cherubs no longer studding a flat sky, merge into and animate the cloud, and are thus at once more real and more ideal.<sup>1</sup> In a later work, the ‘Madonna da Foligno,’ we notice the further development of this idea. The picture is well known. It was painted in the year 1512 in obedience to an order from Sigismondo Conti of Foligno. A remarkable fall of meteors had taken place in September of the previous year, and Conti desired to place this picture on the high altar of the family chapel as a votive offering to the Virgin, in gratitude for her interposition between himself and a fire-ball. On the ground, in the foreground of

<sup>1</sup> Hope Rea, *Tuscan Artists, their Thought and Work*, p. 80.

the picture, kneel St. John and St. Francis, St. Jerome and the donor ; in the midst of this group stands a stately little cherub holding a tablet. His downy wings are outspread, and his face upturned towards the Virgin and Child, who appear enthroned in masses of cloud. All around them are cherubs whose faces melt indistinctly into the clouds. There are not more than about half a dozen whose features can be traced with absolute distinctness, but the picture suggests the presence of hundreds. Perhaps the most popular figure in the picture is the small angel in the group below, with the tablet in his hands. He reminds us somewhat of Bellini's little songsters, but none of them has half as much dignity as this child. They are all occupied in some way ; this little person seems awaiting orders. His face is turned to the Virgin and Child, and his little wings are spread ready to fly on some errand.

Raphael's child angels alone might afford material for our study, but that they are

necessarily of the same type. It is in the persons of the infant Christ and the little St. John that we shall more readily trace the development of childhood in art. Raphael's career, short though it was, divided itself into three periods. During the first, when he was under the influence of Perugino, his pictures are very similar in sentiment to those of his master. The Madonna with the Thistlefinch at Berlin is a good example of this. Sweet though the child undoubtedly is, it is little more than that, and is hardly to be compared with some in his later pictures; that, for instance, in the work known as the 'Madonna del Gran' Duca,' which is quite one of the loveliest babies Raphael ever painted. Entirely a baby, there is something in the depths of this child's eyes which prevents our forgetting his divinity; unlike the child of the Casa Tempi Madonna, whose attitude is very like that of the Gran' Duca baby; but with all its dimpled sweetness it has not the same enthralling power



which compels our gaze. In the Gran' Duca picture, lovely though the Madonna is, we are entirely fascinated by the Child; the Casa Tempi Mother and Child are inseparable; we cannot think of the one without the other.

The best-preserved of the pictures painted during Raphael's Florentine period, and indeed of all his works, is the *Ansdei Madonna* in the National Gallery. It is here reproduced (Plate XII.), and is almost too well known to need any words of description. We learn from the date on the border of the Virgin's robe that it was painted in the year 1506. Its name is derived from the fact that it was painted for the family of Filippo di Simoni Ansdei as an altar-piece for the chapel of St. Nicholas of Bari in the church of San Fiorenzo. On the right of the picture stands St. Nicholas; on the left, St. John the Baptist. At the feet of the former, who is robed in full canonicals, lie three balls, the emblem of this particular saint,

typical of the Trinity, but having reference to three purses of gold which he is said to have thrown into a poor man's window that his daughters might not be portionless. In his right hand, St. Nicholas holds his pastoral staff, and his eyes are intently fixed on a book. St. John, garbed in his raiment of camel's hair, looks upward with an ecstatic expression; in his left hand he holds a cross of purest crystal, instead of, as was usual, a cross of reeds. On the edge of the canopy above the Virgin's head are the words: 'Salve Mater Christi.' Beyond, in the background, is a city in a landscape. The Virgin, who is presumably teaching the Child to read, holds him on her knee, while with her other hand she points to the page of a book that lies open before her. In this picture we may notice one interesting characteristic of Raphael's second period, the girlishness of the Madonna and the likeness between her and the Child.

About the time that he painted the *Ansidei Madonna*, or very soon afterwards,



THE "ANSIDEI" MADONNA  
RAPHAEL



Raphael began to paint the Holy Family more frequently than the Virgin and Child alone. At first he evidently considered that the third figure, that of the little St. John, upset the harmony of the picture, for in the Terranuova Madonna in the Berlin Museum, he has introduced another child besides the Christ and the Baptist. Why is not certain, unless it is that he was unaccustomed to the arrangement of the picture, and thought an extra figure necessary to balance the composition. Nor do we know who the child is, though suggestions of St. John the Evangelist, or St. James the Less, have been made. In course of time, however, Raphael completely mastered the grouping of the Holy Family, the most beautiful examples of which are the Madonna of the Goldfinch and *La Belle Jardinière*.

The motive of the former picture is very lovely. The little Christ stands reading at his mother's knee, when his study is interrupted by the entrance of the little

St. John, who, flushed and panting with his chase after the bird, brings in a goldfinch. He holds the poor fluttering creature gently, carefully, for fear of hurting it, and the child Christ turns round to stroke its ruffled feathers with a loving touch. The streaks of crimson among the bird's feathers have been said to render it emblematic of sacrifice, which is supposed to account for the sadness of the Divine Child as contrasted with the joyful excitement which animates the little Baptist. Perhaps this is so; though, surely, sufficient explanation is to be found in the thought of how the tender heart of the Christ child would throb with sympathy for the imprisoned and frightened bird.

La Belle Jardinière, which is in the Louvre, was a favourite subject with Raphael; so much so that within two years he painted at least three variations of it. As is suggested by the title, the picture shows the Virgin seated in a landscape of great beauty, the foreground being carpeted with flowers. In front of her stands

the child Jesus, one hand across the book which lies on her lap. His left foot rests lightly upon hers, and his expression of love has been rarely surpassed by even Raphael himself. Close beside them is the little St. John, who on bended knee worships the Divine Child.

It has been stated that the most popular of Raphael's pictures, and the most well-known work of art, is the circular picture known as the *Madonna della Sedia*. This shows us the Virgin, a pretty Italian peasant, holding the Child on her knee tightly to her, while close beside them stands the little St. John. About the origin of the picture a very pretty story is told.

Many years ago, among the hills near Rome, there lived a hermit who was loved and revered by all who knew him. In the same part of the world lived a wine-dresser who had a beautiful daughter, named Mary. A terrible storm caused the hermit to be in danger of his life, but, thanks to Mary and the branches of an oak-tree in which

he took refuge, he was saved. His gratitude was intense, and he prayed to God that the girl and the oak-tree might be distinguished in some way. He did not live to see his prayer granted; the tree was cut down and converted into casks for Mary's father, the wine-dresser. Some years afterwards, Mary was sitting by one of these casks playing with her children, the elder of whom ran up to her with a stick which he had fashioned into the shape of a cross, when Raphael, who had long been seeking a model, passed. He saw the group, and stopped. Picking up the smooth cover of the wine cask, he sketched thereon the figures of the mother and children, and took it away with him to paint on its surface the Madonna della Sedia. In this way was the blessing invoked by the old hermit fulfilled and both Mary and the oak immortalised.

The Madonna della Sedia is a good example of Raphael's third or Roman period. His treatment of children had consider-



ably altered. The contrast between the Christ and the Baptist was not so distinctly marked, except that Raphael usually painted the little St. John with dark curls, while the hair of the child Jesus was soft and fair. The Christ was no longer a helpless infant, but a strong and graceful child. This change was probably owing to the influence of Michael Angelo, with whom Raphael came in contact during his stay in Florence. This influence is also traceable in the cartoons, which are the designs for tapestries in the Sistine Chapel. Michael Angelo's genius lay in the portrayal of powerful figures; his studies in the nude rendering him a master in anatomical drawing. In the cartoon of the Beautiful Gate are two children, one running with a pair of doves slung over his shoulder. Mr. Ruskin calls it 'a surgical diagram of a child in a running position,'<sup>1</sup> and this is very true. Michael Angelo would at any

<sup>1</sup> *On the Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret* (1872).

rate have endowed the figure with a certain degree of energy, but in Raphael's imitation of his style the child is transformed into a motionless form. His foot is raised in the act of running, but will he ever put it down? No, he is as immovable as was Lot's wife when she became a pillar of salt. The other boy in the cartoon is more natural. His muscles, as abnormally developed as those of the running child, are more in keeping with his action. He is tugging at his grandfather's girdle in a futile attempt to induce him to move on; the old man is absorbed in what St. Peter is saying to the cripple, and pays no heed to the child's forcible entreaties; and forcible they must indeed be, if we may judge from the way the muscles stand out on the child's body. In spite of this exaggeration on Raphael's part, the little boy's action is very characteristic of childhood. He does not feel the least interest in St. Peter's remarks, the cripple arouses no sympathy in him; his only wish is to move on, and this he im-

patiently intimates to the old man, whose whole attention is fixed on the apostle's words. In another cartoon, that of the Sacrifice at Lystra, two boys at the altar are solely concerned with their own affairs, and take no interest in the ceremony whatever. One is wholly absorbed in the playing of his pipe; the other has turned to stare at a ram which is just being brought in for sacrifice.

Even in his early pictures of the Madonna and Child, Raphael brings this characteristic to the fore. Whenever he depicts the Madonna reading in a book, the Child is usually shown endeavouring to distract her attention. A variation of this same trait may be observed in the Madonna del Passeggio, in the Bridge-water Gallery. This picture, which, however, may be unauthentic, shows the meeting of the Virgin and Child with the little St. John. The Virgin tries to hold the Child back, but he presses forward to embrace his little playfellow.

Of the greatest of Raphael's pictures, perhaps the most wonderful picture in the world, the Sistine Madonna, it were almost better not to speak. It conveys its own wonderful message in a silence which is eloquent, and which many words of description would only mar. It is a vision which the genius of Raphael has transferred to canvas—a vision of God and the Mother of God. Around them an aureole of cherubs melts into heavenly radiance; before them kneel St. Sixtus and St. Barbara, while at the base of the picture two little angels look upwards in wondering adoration (Plate XIII.). It is said that the idea of these cherubs was suggested to Raphael by the presence of two little boys who used to climb up to one of the windows of his studio and gaze at him, open-mouthed and astonished, as he worked.

On Raphael's treatment of childhood a good deal more might be said, but these inadequate words must suffice. The beauty of the child soul is apparent through all his



MADONNA DI SAN SISTO

RAPHAEL



work, and the intense joy in life which characterises many of his children makes him a master in this branch of art.

Another artist whose sympathy with childhood has produced some charming work is Luini of Milan. Some studies in the Ambrosiana in that city show well how he loved the soft curves of babyhood, and one of his most noted pictures is the 'Madonna of the Rose Trellis.' In this we are reminded of Da Vinci's types of the Virgin and Child, but there is less affectation about this Virgin of Luini. She is simply dressed in the garb of a poor woman, and the rather cunning smile of Leonardo's Virgin has given place to one of tender pride in the beautiful child on her knee. He leans across to grasp a columbine which grows in a vase near him, and holds the stalk of the flower in his right hand. Behind the mother and child is a trellis on which twine red and white roses, whence the picture derives its name. This picture is in the Brera, where are also

preserved some fragments of fresco decoration from the Villa Pelucca near Monza. A fragment is also in the Wallace Collection, representing a 'child-genius' holding up some grapes, a very dainty piece of work showing how the tide was beginning to turn in favour of classical subjects instead of purely religious ones.

Bertucci of Faenza is described by Dr. Richter as 'a hybrid artist who borrowed indiscriminately from the works of the Umbrian Masters and those of Lorenzo Costa.' It is true Bertucci is not a great artist, indeed he can hardly be called well known, but if we may judge from the specimen of his painting here reproduced, he did his borrowing with more discrimination than Dr. Richter gives him credit for. He has compiled a very pretty picture (Plate xiv.), and though it is certainly reminiscent of Costa's style, we need admire it none the less. The Virgin, bearing in her left hand a lily, supports with the right the Child, who stands on her





THE GLORIFICATION OF THE VIRGIN



knee with one hand round her neck. She sits on a bank of cloud, her feet rest on another, while from below the hem of her robe peep tiny cherubs. Below, seated on a low wall which surrounds a marble pavement, are two child angels. The one on the left, with his knees crossed, his upturned face smiling in happy love, has just interrupted his music on a rebec; the other on the right is wholly absorbed in the sound which he extracts from a long pipe. On the cloud which forms the throne are two cherubs who hold long lighted tapers; while from the clouds above lean tiny beings who hold a crown over the Virgin's head. Bertucci had not the perception of Raphael in his visions of the heavenly host: his company of cherubim does not melt into radiant mists, but the charm of the little children making melody to the honour and praise of their child King is very real.

The divinity of Raphael's little Christ comes sharply to our minds when we look

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at the Holy Family by Andrea del Sarto (Plate xv.). The only tokens by which we recognise this work as representing a sacred scene are the cross and scroll flung on the ground at the feet of their little owner, St. John. Considered in the light of a purely religious picture, it is weighed in the balances and found wanting; as a simple domestic scene, it is wholly delightful. Here is a lovely little group; two mothers, one with the weight of many years upon her, the other young and beautiful, paying the most earnest attention to her companion's words, and their respective children, two beautiful boys, full of life and energy and animated by a reckless joy. What is there to distinguish these children from any other pair of equally lovely little ones? Nothing whatever. They are simply strong, happy, overflowingly happy, human babies. Beyond the joy of the moment they have no thought; that they accept unquestioningly. No hint is there of oncoming clouds. The



THE HOLY FAMILY  
DIT SARTO



cross of reeds lies unheeded on the ground; it can cast no shadow on this childish merriment.

The ideal child of Michael Angelo is also a strong, healthful boy; this is shown in his unfinished picture of the Holy Family (National Gallery, No. 10). All the figures are powerful in physique and statuesque in attitude. The Virgin is reading in a book, and her face is grave and sad. The child Christ lays his hand on the volume and tries to take it away, but his mother draws it gently back. There is abundance of life in the composition, but as a presentment of childhood it is not pleasing. Michael Angelo's genius failed entirely in the painting of children.

For daintiness and grace few can surpass Correggio. The lovely little picture of the 'Madonna della Cesta' is a fair specimen of his style (Plate XVI.). Its title is as inappropriate as that of Del Sarto's picture; but considered merely as an incident in domestic life, it could hardly be more

beautiful. Painted on wood, it has all the delicacy of a miniature on ivory, and is exquisite in colour and composition. In the background is Joseph working with a plane. The Virgin, simply and gracefully clothed, sits with the child on her knee trying to dress him. She has just succeeded in putting one little arm into the sleeve of his coat, when the child's attention is caught by something to the left of the picture, though outside its range, and he stretches out his hand to reach it. His whole attitude betokens the unquenchable vitality of a healthy, happy child, and the Virgin's proud smile is more than justified by the loveliness of this golden-haired boy. But the picture would have lost nothing in interest if the artist had given it another name; if it is, as we may suppose, a portrait of his own wife and child, their memory would have been immortalised, and Correggio saved the censure of many critics who deplore the lack of reverence in this treatment of a sacred subject.





MADONNA DELLA CESTA

CORREGGIO



At Chatsworth is a lovely study of children in red chalk, little round-limbed creatures playing with all the unconscious grace of babyhood, just as we might imagine Cupid frolicking after the reading-lesson which, in one of Correggio's masterpieces, Mercury is attempting to give him. This latter picture, hanging next to the 'Madonna della Cesta' in the National Gallery, is very true to life. The child Cupid's attitude suggests utter non-comprehension of what the messenger of the gods is trying to teach him; for 'Love learns through the heart and not through the head.' His attention has been caught for an instant by the strange marks on the paper, and he looks at them wonderingly, thinking to find therein a new means of amusement; failing this, his intention is to scamper off in search of fresh mischief. The games of the lovely children in the decoration of the Convent of San Paolo at Parma are more to Master Cupid's taste than study. These enchanting little beings, some of them

perfect miracles of beauty, dancing and playing in roundels on the ceiling, are among the loveliest specimens of the Cupid type. They are much more real than Cupid, however; though some of them are, like him, armed with bow and arrows, we can more readily believe them human children. Some are unoccupied; others have horns which they blow with all the zest of the modern child who ill-treats a penny whistle or tin trumpet; the most fascinating of all being the youngest of this troop of happy babies, a dear little person with his dimpled arms flung round the neck of a big white deerhound, who, after the manner of his kind, seems rather to enjoy than resent the action.

From mythological subjects to sacred scenes seems a long stride, but such is the adaptability of these little beings that they can assume fluffy wings and sing and fly among the clouds of heaven without it striking us as incongruous. In spite of the different significance, there is a distinct

family likeness between Cupid and a cherub; the joyous little creatures which hover about the Madonna and Child are closely akin to the little pagan god, the difference lying in the environment. As the natural accessories in Correggio's religious pictures, we find scores of tiny angels, either melting into infinite distance as in some of Raphael's masterpieces, or clearly defined, and playing some fixed part in the scene, each and all very lovely, an ideal of happy innocence.

As a master of light and shade we see Correggio at his best in 'La Notte' (the Holy Night) in the Dresden Gallery. The scene is the interior of a stable; through the open door we catch a glimpse of the distant hills silhouetted against the first silver streaks of the oncoming dawn. A tangle of heavenly beings on a cloud have floated in, and hang in mid-air above the group of astonished shepherds who have left their flocks to see the wonder God has wrought. The otherwise gloomy stable

is pervaded by an unearthly radiance which emanates from the Holy Child, illumining faintly the figures of Joseph and the ass, and dazzling the eyes of a peasant girl who has stolen in with the shepherds. The Virgin, with the little downy head pillowed on her arm, looks down in wonder on the lovely child. But with the breaking of the day, the worshipping peasants go one by one to their daily tasks, and the vision of celestial beings fades : the stable is once more deserted save for the mother and child. This is the scene which Correggio shows us in a picture in the Uffizi Gallery. Upon the ground kneels the Virgin. The edge of her mantle is spread on a low step in front of her, and on it lies the child. Here the mother, the first overpowering joy past, pours out her soul in adoration of the tiny babe, while he lifts his little hands towards her. A more simple scene could hardly be, but it is full of a divine power which makes it one of Correggio's most beautiful pictures.

To the names of Raphael and Correggio another must be added, that of Titian. In the sixteenth century these three, and these three alone, were great as far as the painting of childhood was concerned. Each grasped the characteristics of childhood in a way which the other artists of their time never equalled. With Raphael they were embodied in the Divine Child; with Correggio they crystallised into a human baby, whether he was called the Christ child or Cupid. Titian's genius took a wider range, and from the child Christ, the cherubs of the Assumption to the dignity of the little lady of the Strozzi family, with her lovely jewels and no less lovely face—all are painted with equal success.

His conception of the infant Christ is shown in two pictures in the National Gallery. One shows the Holy Family resting on the way to Egypt. They have been met by St. Catherine, who kisses the laughing, crowing baby, while a beautiful little St. John presents flowers to the Virgin.

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The other picture shows the worship of a humble shepherd. He kneels before the child, who, half frightened at the strange new face, turns for protection to his mother. Encouraged, however, by her smile, he looks at the worshipper with timid interest, and a cautious curiosity may be read in the little face. This is a true picture of babyhood.

Another use made by Titian of the child form is in the famous 'Assumption' at Venice (Plate xvii.). There the Virgin ascends to heaven accompanied by myriads of small celestial beings, who fling themselves about among the downy masses of cloud with all the abandonment of infant joy. The clouds are literally alive with them. The distinct sprawling, jumping, laughing babies in the foreground are transformed by distance into little cloud-phantoms. Below is a cloud of worshippers gazing in adoration while the Virgin mounts steadily heavenwards with uplifted hands, and the little cherubs sing their pæans





THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN  
ITALIAN



of joy. From beneath the robe of the Almighty, who stretches forth His hand in blessing, other cherubs greet their joyous companions. These are triumphant children of heaven.

If we would see yet another aspect of childhood from Titian's brush, the National Gallery contains the picture called 'Bacchus and Ariadne': but Bacchus on his car drawn by leopards, and Ariadne as she turns in flight, are almost unnoticed after the first glance. A child in the foreground attracts and holds fast our attention. Absolutely free from self-consciousness, he marches along in the train of the wine-god, his head thrown back in the most exquisite and triumphant delight; just as a child of to-day seeing a band of soldiers tramp along the street will temporarily join the ranks and march beside them, making believe, in the exuberance of his own imagination, to be a red-coat himself. So does this flower-crowned baby, and we feel an answering thrill as the little

face looks saucily from the canvas, inviting us to share in the joy which impels its dancing steps.

Round about Titian cluster a host of other names, amongst them Tintoretto and Veronese; but none of these artists found out anything new to tell the world about childhood. Their children are essentially the same as those of other artists, slightly modified according to the temperament of the painter and the nature of his environment. Tintoretto painted cherubs and the Christ child, some child figures in the frescoes of the Scuola di San Rocco, and on the ceiling some children's heads. Of these Mr. Ruskin says, 'it is much to be regretted they should be thus lost in filling small vacuities of the ceiling.'<sup>1</sup> Veronese has given us some very natural children in his picture of 'The Supper at Emmaus' in the Louvre, which picture seems to be mainly portraits of himself, his wife, and his family. Two pretty little girls are playing with a dog

<sup>1</sup> *Stones of Venice*, iii. 351 (1853).

in front of the table, and the rest of the family, including three other children, is grouped near them.

So the names of Raphael, Correggio, and Titian stand for the masters in the painting of childhood during the sixteenth century; nay, more than that, among all their predecessors in Italian art, they alone are worthy to wear the laurel wreath which is the victor's due. The cold classicism of Greece, the borrowed art of Rome, produced no children; it remained for the live coal of Christianity to kindle the pure flame which illumined before men's eyes the beauty of childhood, in the persons of the little Christ and St. John. In the hands of Raphael was the truest and most beautiful conception reached. But men could not for long paint only their idea of the Holy Child. The child form began to be studied, and in this study it flashed across the minds of a few enlightened artists that not only was it a very beautiful form, but the spirit within it was equally so, and

full of innumerable possibilities in all its fanciful wayward moods, its tender loving ways, its inconsequent joys and griefs. With the art of Correggio and Titian the climax, so far as it concerned the Italian school, was reached. After this the child was treated with less respect. The sugared daintiness of Carlo Dolci is as little to our taste as the vulgarity of some artists of the Roman and Neapolitan schools. What degradation the conception of childhood suffered is well expressed in a picture by Baroccio.<sup>1</sup> The theme of this, which is a group of the Holy Family, is the tormenting of an unfortunate bird by a cat. This 'intellectual treat' seems to be greatly enjoyed by all the figures in the group, even the little Christ himself. Contrast with this idea that of Raphael's Madonna of the Goldfinch, which was painted barely a century earlier. Where is the reverence with which Raphael painted the child Jesus? The tenderness of the child's heart

<sup>1</sup> 'Our Lady of the Cat.' National Gallery, No. 29.

has hardened into deliberate cruelty. For whether it is the Christ child or any other child whom Baroccio thus shows as taking delight in the torture of a fellow-creature is not the point. If for the Holy Child we were to substitute the humblest peasant boy, would not the degradation of childhood be just the same?

Yet let us not hastily award the prize to Raphael, to Correggio, or to Titian. The tournament is not over; 'tis but mid-day. There are others waiting to enter the lists; hardy Northerners from Germany and Holland, courtly Spaniards and Frenchmen, and from Britain too, men of renown. Let us, therefore, withhold our judgment.

## CHAPTER VI

FROM the artists of Italy with their ideal conceptions of childhood, we turn to look at an altogether different style of art. The cloudy skies and more rigorous climate of the countries north of the Alps; the different religious spirit there prevailing; the different modes of thought and living—all these combine to make the child in German and Dutch art a great contrast to the child of the Italian Renaissance. Instead of the flighty little Cupids, the dainty cherubs, the ideally beautiful Holy Children of Italian Art, we find little German and Dutch children depicted with the utmost truth and candour and not in the least idealised.

Yet incipient angels are not entirely



absent from German art. The art of Germany was at first avowedly religious, and the work of Albrecht Dürer, the earliest painter of note, was more in sympathy with the artistic idealism of Italy than was that of his successors. In some of his engravings we may see a plentiful supply of cherubs and similar baby forms. Some of them are very quaint, as little like the Italian *putti* as these in many instances were like real babies. A cloudlet of them hovers above the fugitive family on the road to Egypt; and once there, when Joseph takes up his former trade of a carpenter and Mary sits beside the cradle of her sleeping Son, these same cherubs perform all sorts of antics, and play all manner of absurd games with the chips and shavings that fly from Joseph's block of wood. One of them is playing with a 'windmill,' a toy dear to the hearts of modern babies; and he holds by the hand another tiny angel, whom he is literally dragging along to join his

comrades. Another is busy with a miniature hay-fork. These quaint little beings add a great deal of charm to the engraving; though, while they are clearly meant to represent celestial attendants, we may find it difficult to realise they are other than perfectly natural human children.

Dürer's child Christ differs little in form from these romping cherubs. Only once did Dürer allow himself to idealise the divine Child, and that was in a picture of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven standing on the crescent moon with the child in her arms; but we cannot pretend that the result reaches our standard of infant grace. The specimen is just an average one of German babyhood, which as represented in art is often unnecessarily fat and rarely pretty.

The presence of a child in one of Dürer's most famous prints, the 'Melencolia,' is curious. The subject is a woman, clothed in sombre raiment, surrounded by scientific instruments and every facility for

study and research, yet wrapped in the deepest and most impenetrable melancholy. By her side is seated a winged child—does it represent the human soul? ‘There the child sits on the grindstone of necessity, subject to law, but unconscious of its workings, while the more fully grown soul, after ceaseless strivings with nature, falls into that melancholy, or Weltschmerz, as the Germans call it, that at some time overclouds all great minds.’<sup>1</sup>

As Dürer’s work is unique, so are his little German cherubs. The other great master of his time, Holbein, went further afield for his ideas on the subject of childhood, and painted portraits, by which he has made us familiar with some English children of that day, notably Prince Edward, afterwards Edward VI., whom Holbein seems to have painted several times. In the Royal Gallery at Hanover is a portrait of this child at the age of

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Albrecht Dürer*. M. M. Heaton. London, 1881, p. 207.

two. He is splendidly dressed in red velvet and gold lace, and from out of the closely fitting bonnet of white, which is surrounded by a red velvet cap adorned with a white plume, looks the round baby face: rather a solemn little face, as if at this early age he had already found his high rank more of a burden than a privilege. This somewhat serious expression deepened into more definite sadness as the child grew older, as we may see from a chalk drawing at Windsor and a later portrait in the South Kensington Museum. But it seems also to have been the peculiar characteristic of all Holbein's child portraits. Two miniatures in the library at Windsor Castle, pictures of the little sons of the Duke of Suffolk, are invested with a most pathetic expression; and Holbein's portrait of his own wife and children, though one of the prettiest of family groups, is extraordinarily mournful. The mother is sad; the little boy looks as if tears were very near the surface; even the

red-haired baby wears a look of the deepest dejection.

Perhaps Holbein's most celebrated picture, and certainly one of the most beautiful from his brush, is that known as the Meyer Madonna ; which is here reproduced (Plate XVIII.). It was painted at the order of one Jacob Meyer, a Burgomaster at Basle ; and intended to be set up over an altar in a chapel. It represents the Virgin and Child in the midst of the donor's family. At her right kneels the Burgomaster, his hands clasped, his face upturned to the child in the Virgin's arms. In front of him is his son, whose hands rest on the shoulders of a beautiful baby boy. Upon this lovely child is fixed the attentive gaze of Meyer's daughter Anna, who kneels opposite. Behind her kneel two women in nun-like robes with white head-dresses ; one, Meyer's first wife, who died fifteen years before the picture was painted, and whose features Holbein never saw ; the other Anna's mother. In the centre of

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this group, under a shell-shaped canopy, stands the majestic figure of the Virgin, crowned, and with long fair hair floating over her shoulders. The child in her arms looks weak and ill; he lies back against her shoulder in a weary attitude, and stretches out his left hand towards the group of worshippers. Various theories have been advanced in explanation of this. The fact that it is the child's left hand which is outstretched seems to do away with the idea of benediction; while the extraordinary likeness between him and the child on the ground, who, it will be noticed, is looking at his own outstretched arm, has given rise to the notion that the child in the Virgin's arms is not the Divine child, but the Burgomaster's baby son, whom the Virgin has taken up to heal of some defect in the arm, while the lower part of the picture shows him restored to health. That there are signs of suffering in the face of the child in the Virgin's arms is manifest. Another very beautiful



THE MEYER MADONNA  
HOLBEIN





interpretation has been given which would account for this. 'A father and mother have prayed to the Virgin for the life of their sick child. She appears to them, her own Christ in her arms. She puts down her Christ beside them—takes their child into her arms instead. It lies down upon her bosom, and stretches its hand to its father and mother saying farewell.'<sup>1</sup> In short, we may read what meaning we will into the picture, which lends itself so well to these beautiful theories that it is almost impossible to prove them wrong. The original picture is in the Grand Ducal Palace at Darmstadt; while a copy, so excellent that it passed for years as the original, is in the Dresden Gallery.

So much then for the child in German art, properly so called. It is mainly to Dutch and Flemish artists that we are indebted for many delightful domestic scenes in which the child plays an active part. The Dutch saw in childhood an

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *On the Old Road*, i. p. 235.

infinite amount of character; children are little individuals who have their own particular business to attend to, and it is wholly absorbing to them, though poor foolish grown-up people may fail to see in what its fascination lies. There are some quaint little mortals in a picture by Pieter Brueghel, called the 'Alchemist.' The scene is the interior of a laboratory where work is in full swing. The three children, however, pay not the slightest attention to anything going on around them; they are occupied with a game of their own. Two of them have clambered up into a cupboard in the wall. The head of one is almost completely covered by what looks suspiciously like an inverted cauldron or saucepan; but from the child's air of pride it might be a helmet and he a knight in chain armour. He stretches out a hand to help a smaller child, who stands on a low stool below with upstretched arms and an imploring little face, evidently in fear that it will be left entirely out of the fun.

Through the open window we catch a glimpse of a man with a child hanging on to each hand walking across the village green to a building marked 'Hospital.' Perhaps they have been getting into mischief and paid the price by a cut or burnt finger.

The conception of these children is in advance of the technique. Is it too much to say of a far greater artist, Peter Paul Rubens, that his technical skill is superior to his conception of childhood?

Rubens has been called the king of child painters. Let us not hastily depose him; but surely a worthier has been found to reign supreme in this branch of art. As a master in the art of painting the child form, Rubens owes allegiance to none. We look at the wreath of romping boys in the Gallery at Munich, healthy-looking naked babes in the happiest of moods, and see how inimitably perfect and natural are their several attitudes, how full of glee are the faces beneath the halos of tumbled

curls ; but does their joy in life awaken an answering thrill in us ? We can rejoice with the little child faun in Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne,' but we are unmoved at the sight of these children's play. With all Rubens' genius, he missed the essence of childhood. He could and did inspire the pictured children with grace and life, he could endow them with every bodily charm, but he saw no further than the outer shell ; their beauty is only skin deep. The child-soul is not there ; their gleeful faces are moved only with the expression of animal spirits. When the frolic is over they will eat and sleep, will eat and play again ; and this they will do till the end of their days. You cannot imagine Rubens' children doing anything else ; in company with Eros of the Greeks, they will never grow up.

Rubens frequently used his own children as models for his cupids and cherubs ; and his portraits of them in everyday life suggest very forcibly these little *amorini* with

the simple addition of clothes. In the Louvre is a picture of his wife, Helena Fourment, with the two little boys. She sits with her arms clasped round the elder child, who stands close beside her; while at her knee stands the younger boy, Nicholas, a chubby, fair-haired child. We can distinctly trace the features of these two children in many of Rubens' pictures; sometimes they pose as cupids, sometimes as little angels, sometimes as the Christ-child and St. John. But the most pleasing child-picture Rubens painted is simply a portrait of the little Nicholas holding in one fat hand the string to which is attached a small green parrot. The boy's face is a study; he is overjoyed at the possession of the bird, yet half alarmed at the fluttering efforts it makes to escape. Something has evidently startled the parrot, for little Nicholas has raised his other hand with a warning gesture. The child is very pretty, with curling fair hair; a natural, attractive baby boy—almost the only attractive child

from Rubens' brush. For how can we expect Rubens to paint for us the true beauty of childhood who in all his pictures loved to dwell on the animal side of human nature, and failed in most cases to endow his creations with aught beside the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Opposed to his work in every respect was that of his pupil, Anthony Van Dyck. While Rubens revelled in painting the drunken orgies of Bacchus and Silenus, Van Dyck's pencil was employed in the portraiture of high-born and noble men; while Rubens modelled the forms of rather coarse and vulgar children, Van Dyck set forth on his canvas the features of little aristocrats.

The children of Charles I. form the subject for Van Dyck's most famous child picture. He painted them three times. The first group, painted in 1635, contains the three eldest children, Charles, afterwards King; Mary, who married William of Orange; and James, Duke of York—



THE CHILDREN OF CHARLES I  
VAN DYCK





the latter being a baby of two. This picture, which we reproduce (Plate XIX.), is in the Turin Gallery. To the left stands Prince Charles, dressed in a long embroidered silk frock, with a deep falling collar edged with lace. His hand rests on the head of a big collie dog who is close beside him, and is quite one of the most interesting figures in the picture. Towards the right stands the stately little figure of Princess Mary. Her dress is open at the throat, round which she wears a necklace of beautiful pearls. Her hair is not, like her brother's, confined by a cap, but falls in ringlets round her face. Behind her, stretching to the left of the picture, is a curtain, which leaves visible behind the head of the baby, James, a peep of the sky and a rose-bush in full bloom. A branch of its lovely blossoms lies at the feet of Princess Mary. The tiny prince, James, stands on a step in stately draperies of silk which trail on the ground behind him. In his hands he holds

an apple. His hair is almost entirely hidden by a closely fitting cap. Regal he does indeed look. It would seem that the painter had interrupted the children in a game, in which the baby played the part of king and received in this dignified fashion the homage offered by his brother and sister and the big dog. None of the party look as if they were posed for the picture; the artist has caught them at the happy moment, when they are surprised into attention, not stiffened into inaction.

About a year later Van Dyck painted these three children again, differently and less effectively grouped. Little James has lost his air of baby wisdom and stands looking rather frightened between Charles and Mary, both of whom seem much more self-conscious than in the earlier picture, and quite aware of what is taking place. Prince Charles has outgrown his frocks, and leans against a column attired in a silk suit and knee breeches; white satin shoes with huge rosettes, and a beautiful lace

collar being prominent features in his costume. On each side of the group is a small spaniel.

Two years later Van Dyck painted a larger group, of which Prince Charles and a huge boarhound, on whose head the boy's hand rests, are the central figures. To the left stand Prince James and Princess Mary, while on the right of the picture are the latest additions to the family, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Anne. The latter, a crowing, kicking baby of a few months old, lies in a big cushioned chair, supported by the little Elizabeth, herself scarcely more than an infant. If Van Dyck's painting of the three elder children is not so successful in this as in former groups, there is nothing to complain of in the treatment of the two youngest. Little Anne stretches out one hand in an effort to touch the big boarhound, and the timid delight on the face of her elder sister is admirably expressed. The pleasure of the little princess in being trusted to hold

the baby is tempered by the fear lest the child should slip from her grasp and hurt herself.

A very lovely portrait of Princess Elizabeth at a later age is at Penshurst Place, the home of the Sidneys.

The nearest in sentiment to Van Dyck is Sir Peter Lely, an artist whom we claim as belonging to the British Isles, though his birthplace was the other side of the channel. His style, even at its best, though modelled on that of Van Dyck, is hardly worthy of comparison with his master's. All his portraits, even those of children, are characterised by a good deal of affectation. The picture here reproduced is a case in point (Plate xx.).

The subject is a little girl feeding a parrot; as it is merely entitled 'Portrait of a Girl,' we may suppose that the aim in introducing the parrot was to give an appearance of naturalness; the result, however, is to accentuate the stiffness of the composition. The child is holding some



GIRL FEEDING A PARROT



cherries in her frock, which is gathered up to show her bare feet; she holds a handful of the fruit out to the parrot, who is perched on a balustrade at her right, but she is thinking so little about the bird, and so much about her own appearance, that she does not hold them near enough, and the poor parrot has to crane his neck to reach them. Any ordinary child would show some interest in her pet, but this little girl does not even look at it, and stands with an air of great complacency, knowing that her hair is nicely curled, and supremely conscious of her best frock. This is of a bluish-white material, presumably satin, but the folds into which it falls are so stiff that it might be glazed calico. A gold band passes from under her left arm across and over her right shoulder.

This picture shows well the difference between Van Dyck's and Lely's children. Van Dyck's portraits never give you the impression that the children are wearing

their best clothes for the occasion ; Lely's children are thinking of nothing else, and so force the fact on your notice.

In the works of Rembrandt but few children are to be found. He painted them as inevitable accessories in any domestic scene, but we shall hardly find in the whole range of his works a picture where a child is the central figure ; except perhaps 'The Adoration of the Magi' at Buckingham Palace, in which the Divine child is illumined with rays of light which serve to intensify the gloom of the remainder of the scene. 'Jacob Blessing his Grandchildren' is another picture in which children play a part, but our attention is rather fixed on the frail patriarch and his daughter-in-law, Asenath, than on the recipients of the blessing. The figure of Joseph at the head of the bed also attracts our notice, as he gently tries to guide the old man's hand to the head of the elder boy Manasseh, from its resting-place on the fair curls of Ephraim ; while the child



listens attentively to his grandfather's words, as if fully comprehending their significance.

Perhaps the sweetest child's face in the art of Holland is that by Govert Flinck, a 'Portrait of a Young Girl' in the Louvre. Crowned with flowers, this little maid sits looking out of the frame with a smiling face. The smile is, as is often the case with children, more in her eyes than on her mouth. Held in her hand, like a sceptre, is a long shovel-shaped spade, such as the Dutch children use at the seaside. And so this little solitary queen waits cheerful and content, even happy, looking for the train of courtiers who never come, and graciously accepting the homage of the passers-by.

A characteristic scene is represented in a picture by Jan Steen in the Ryks Museum at Amsterdam, entitled 'The Feast of St. Nicholas,' where a family of children is shown enjoying the treasures Santa Claus has provided. The festival is kept

in Holland on the 6th of December, not, as with us, on Christmas Day, the 25th. On the evening of the day before the little ones hang up their shoes and stockings, and, according to their deserts, so are these receptacles filled by the Saint; for the good children toys, for the bad ones disappointment. In the background of the picture, which is said to represent the artist's family, are the grandparents. The old man leaning forward with his hands on his knees watches with delight the joy of a chubby little girl in the foreground, who carries an armful of toys, and towards whom her mother holds out her hands. At the mother's side is a boy whose face positively beams; you can in imagination hear him laugh. Behind her is the eldest boy with the baby of the family in his arms and another little brother at his side. He points upwards with one hand; both children follow with their eyes the direction of his gesture, and from the rapt look on their faces we might imagine he is explaining

how St. Nicholas drives in his sledge over the house-tops, and when he reaches the home of good little boys and girls he descends the chimney and fills their socks with all sorts of nice things. Ah, the good Saint, he knows so well what each child has set its heart on having! But this time St. Nicholas has overlooked—purposely perhaps—one member of the family. A big boy, who has doubtless idled away the hours at school instead of attending to his tasks, stands by, tears streaming down his face, and his knuckles pressed into his eyes. The laughing boy points a derisive finger at him, and the elder sister directs his attention to the birch rod placed, as his appropriate gift, in his shoe. A spark of amusement in her face, and the beckoning finger of the grandmother, who is drawing aside a curtain in the corner of the room, lead us to suppose that St. Nicholas has not been so hard-hearted after all, and that there is something in store for the delinquent besides this timely warning.

A master in the painting of Dutch childhood was Nicholas Maes. He is known as one of the chief colourists of the Dutch school; so his claim to distinction is a double one. A picture in the Wallace Collection illustrates this. A laughing boy in a slashed tunic of a beautiful shade of red, with fair hair under his black hat, holds a hawk on his right wrist, and the ends of a leash in his left hand. His face, though almost unnaturally pale, is lit up by the brightness of his eyes and the gaiety of his smile.

Better known and even more beautiful in its own way is 'The Dutch Housewife' (Plate XXI.). To describe the picture is not to give any very clear idea of it, though its subject is of the simplest and most ordinary character, merely the scraping of a parsnip. This does not sound very attractive perhaps, and were this all the picture might not excite our interest to any great degree. The charm of colour and sunshine in this little work is great, but the most fascinating



THE DUTCH HOUSEWIFE

MAFS



figure in it is, not the worthy lady with the knife at work on the parsnip, but the child at her elbow. This quaint little figure stands motionless, intently watching the operation. We have noticed that frequently children are so absorbed in their own little concerns as to take no interest in the occupations of their elders. This picture represents precisely the other view of the case, and shows a no less characteristic trait of childhood. Often the trivial incidents and business of everyday life will cause children to stand in silent wonder and watch the proceedings of their mother or elder sister with an intensity of interest which we might suppose would only be lavished on an important crisis. This little maid's attentive face and attitude form an interesting contrast to a little figure in a picture of 'Christ Blessing Little Children,' which though acknowledged to be by an artist of the school of Rembrandt, is often attributed to Maes. There the child on whose head the hand of

the Christ rests is utterly indifferent to the blessing. He would even be running off in the direction in which his eyes are turned as if watching, had not the Christ laid a detaining hand upon his arm. Among the little crowd surrounding them is another youngster being hoisted up by a bigger boy to look.

Next to Maes with his delightful 'Dutch Housewife,' we may place Pieter de Hooch with his 'Court of a Dutch House,' from the National Gallery, or 'The Buttery' from the Ryks Museum. He loses nothing by comparison. There is the same sympathetic treatment of the child in each. Look at the pride of the little maiden in 'The Buttery,' as she takes the jug into her tiny hands with such care. The servant girl who gives it her seems to say, 'Hadn't you better let me carry it for you?' and every line in the child's attitude seems to answer for the safety of that jug in its transit to the other room. The sunshine streams in





THE COURT OF A DUTCH HOUSE  
DE HOOCH



through the window just as it lights up the courtyard in the other picture, 'The Court of a Dutch House,' which we reproduce (Plate XXII.).

It has been a hot day. Outside through the porch where stands the waiting wife, we can see the glow of the evening sunlight. A passage leads from the porch into a cool courtyard paved with bricks; over the doorway is an inscription, and on the lowest stone at the right hand of the door are the initials P. D. H. and the date 1653. On a low step beneath a leaf-covered trellis are a servant girl with a dish, and a little girl some four or five years old. They have been out feeding the hens, and the child has further amused herself gathering some fruit which she holds in her apron; now the little girl comes to greet her father on his return from the day's work.

Yet one more picture to close this little gallery of Dutch children: and one which does not illustrate any particular character-

istic of childhood, but is simply a picture of the children themselves engaged in the enthralling occupation of blowing bubbles (Plate XXIII.). The elder boy leaning with his hand on the window-sill anxiously watches the progress of a bubble which floats above his head. Behind him is his little brother with cheeks puffed out in the exertion of blowing another. In his other hand the bigger boy holds a cap of dull crimson velvet adorned with beautiful golden and white plumes, according well with his suit of grey with ruffles of white at neck and wrists, and his curly fair hair. This picture, by Netscher, is in the National Gallery, and is little like the ordinary Dutch style. They are not homely children in caps and wooden shoes, but little cavaliers; yet capable of enjoying life just as thoroughly in their silks and velvets as their humbler brothers and sisters in homespun.

The art of Germany, Holland and Flanders did, as we have seen, make much



BLOWING BUBBLES

NETSCHER



more of the simple and real side of life, as opposed to the imaginative and ideal view of things. The sunny skies and open outdoor life of Italy did not promote the cultivation of the home, which was the idol of the Teutonic heart. The artists of each country looked at Nature differently. The Italians were handicapped at the start, and began with the ideal. The northern artists began with the material nearest at hand, and made the truth of Nature, as manifested to them, the subjects for their brush. Then in the endeavour 'to avoid the fault with which they reproached the Dutch—that of not knowing how to *idealise the real*—the Germans fell into the opposite extreme, of being unable to *realise the ideal*.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently after the death of Dürer and Holbein, artistic Germany fell into a state of coma, from which it was eventually revived by the efforts of Cornelius and Overbeck.

<sup>1</sup> *Wonders of European Art*. Louis Viardot, p. 101 (1871).

Whatever has been the fate of childhood in German art, whatever lies in store for it in the future, one name, that of Ludwig Richter, will stand out among all modern artists of whatever land as one deserving of honour. The tender grace of childhood lends itself to book-illustration, and Richter's drawings in a volume of fairy stories are very true to the child spirit. From the tiniest infants to older boys and girls, Richter's children are endowed with the same wonderful sweetness. Now we see a merry troop blowing on long trumpets the glad tidings of Christmas; now frolicking in the fields, or resting, weary from their games, on the soft grass. Sometimes in the depths of the woodland we catch a glimpse of Red Riding Hood gathering flowers; farther on we meet Hansel and Gretel starting with their father and mother on their adventurous journey. Then on a rainy day we may come upon numbers of children in the warm shelter of the kitchen



carrying on games modified to suit their more limited environment. As evening falls we may see these little ones tucked up in bed, having said their nightly prayer at an elder sister's knee, and believe that their pillows will be guarded by a little fairy whose duty it is to whisper the sweetest dreams into the ears of good children until they wake.

## CHAPTER VII

**I**N Spanish art two names rise prominently before our minds, those of Velasquez and Murillo. Before their day the art of Spain was merely a translation of the most debased style of Italian art. All individual tendencies were crushed by the hand of the Inquisition: and conventional religious pictures alone represent the early art of this most barbarous of civilised nations. Can we indeed expect to find any adequate appreciation of innocent childhood in an art consecrated to the service of a Church so strongly influenced by the Inquisition that an office, that of 'Inspector of Sacred Pictures,' was instituted in order to repress any unorthodox tendencies on the part of the artists?

This gloomy state of affairs prevailed until the seventeenth century when two brilliant meteors flashed their light upon the national art, only to die and leave no worthy successor to carry on the distinction which they, through their greatness, gave to Spanish painting. As far as the art of Spain is concerned they stand alone, unrivalled in its history. Yet there is no question of comparison between them, for Velasquez, like Van Dyck, is the artist of the aristocracy; Murillo, unlike any other in his age, is the painter of poverty.

The portraits of Velasquez are his chief works, and amongst his sitters we find the little Don Balthazar Carlos, and the Infanta Margarita Maria. Of these children, Velasquez painted many portraits. We can trace on his canvas every stage of the growth and every fresh development of the character of the little prince. Yet from his earliest years he is dignified and stately. Whether as a tiny child in stiff robes of material so rich that it might

almost stand alone, or as a little lad in hunting dress accompanied by his four-footed attendants, or mounted on his overfed pony, his rank is always apparent. Of these the most famous picture is the equestrian portrait in the Prado at Madrid, here reproduced (Plate XXIV.). His fat pony prances up a slight incline towards us, looking almost ready to leap out of the picture. In spite of what would seem unwonted energy on the part of his steed, the little prince sits as steadily and serenely as if he were mounted on a wooden rocking-horse. His dress is rich, as are also the trappings of his pony, and from under the dark brim of his hat a very serious little face looks out at us. His royalty sits quaintly upon his small shoulders; he is every inch a prince.

Equally sedate is the little Infanta, Margarita Maria. We feel rather sorry for the three-year-old baby, who, in the picture in the Vienna Gallery, carries a fan and is dressed up in stiff silks and laces



DON BALTHAZAR CARLOS  
VFLASQUEZ



like the elder ladies of the court. Her portrait in the Louvre, of which there is a replica in the Wallace Collection, shows us a pretty little fair-haired girl, a knot of pink ribbon in her hair, which is arranged simply, like that of an English child. Her dress of white satin is trimmed with rows and rows of black lace. The same child is the central figure of Velasquez's famous group 'Las Meninas,' or 'The Maids of Honour'; and though she is distinguished by a regal dignity, we feel that her rank is oppressive, and that she is at heart as blithe and gay as the little maiden in the 'The Betrothal.'

This picture, once attributed to Velasquez, is supposed to represent the betrothal of the artist's little granddaughter. The principal figures in this group are on a platform. The artist himself, pen in hand, is seated at the table ready to sign the marriage contract; near him are two friends who have probably come to witness the ceremony. Behind

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the chief actress in the scene, the little girl, stands her mother, the artist's daughter. She and her father smile at the eager joy of the child who, as she sees her future husband appearing, waves a greeting to him with the flower in her hand. She has no knowledge of what lies before her, or of what this formal visit implies; she only looks upon him as a kind elder brother who will play with her, and enter into any of her childish delights with a zeal equal to her own. A very natural incident in the picture is to be noticed in the left-hand corner, where the dog, barking furiously, flies at a slave who is bringing in a basket of fruit.

This picture illustrates a child's joy; whilst hung immediately opposite it is a peculiarly dramatic scene of which grief is the keynote. 'Christ at the Column' is the name given to the picture; an alternative title has been suggested, 'The Institution of Prayer.' The Christ, whose hands are bound by a long cord attached





BEGGAR BOYS  
MURILLO



to a pillar, has sunk down on the ground. Beside him lie the rod and scourges, the cruel blows from which have caused the blood to trickle down his shoulder. Behind stands an angel directing the gaze of a kneeling child to the sorrow and suffering of the Redeemer. The child kneels with clasped hands and parted lips in the attitude of prayer, and from its heart to the Christ's ear stretches a ray of light. Grief and pity mingle in the child's face.

Velasquez was essentially the painter of character, as Murillo was essentially the painter of sentiment. In delineating childhood Murillo is at his best. His earliest fame in England rested on his pictures of beggar children, and it may rightly continue to do so. The portrayal of poverty is his own particular province, which has been invaded by few with much success. Two of Murillo's most famous pictures of beggar boys are in the Dulwich Gallery. One represents a trio of ragamuffins, two of whom are seated on the ground. The

third, a negro, holding a jar on his shoulder, stretches out his hand as if asking for a share of the tart which is held by one of his companions. The other picture (Plate xxv.) shows a boy playing with two balls and an iron bar or spike. He laughs up over his shoulder at another lad, who stands by munching a mouthful of bread from the loaf in his hand. Both children are in rags, one being barefooted; and between them stands a dog, who, though the tidiest figure in the group, is none the less hungry, and looks up imploringly at the bread in his little master's hand.

The Munich Gallery is rich in similar specimens of Murillo's art. Little barefooted urchins crouching in sunny street corners, eating juicy melons and grapes, or gambling with dice. Perhaps the least pleasing, and most truthful, is the picture of a sunburnt boy lying in front of an old woman with his head in her lap, while she performs the task of hairdresser. Well may critics accuse Murillo of loving



THE HOLY FAMILY

MURILLO



to dwell on the merely disgusting aspect of poverty, the dirt ! The child's attitude, however, is remarkably good. In his hand he holds a piece of bread, which a puppy, taking advantage of his helplessness, is trying to reach. The boy has failed to ward off the dog's attacks with his free hand, and clasps the bread more tightly to him, having previously bitten off a large piece which he is contentedly munching.

Some of Murillo's religious pictures are very beautiful, but in an entirely superficial way. The character is nowhere; though some of his children are very pretty. The 'Good Shepherd,' the 'Children of the Shell' in the Prado, the 'St. John and a Lamb' in the National Gallery; all these are charming conceptions of childhood, but what more are they than portraits of little peasant boys, who have been washed, be it understood, and from whose faces all trace of roguishness, the quality which principally takes our fancy in

Murillo's *gamins*, has been eliminated, leaving them insipidly pretty and no more? The 'St. John and a Lamb' is only a dark-haired, dark-eyed peasant, with his arms thrown round a lamb; a pretty scene, but hardly a worthy personification of him who was the forerunner of the Lamb of God.

'The Holy Family' (Plate xxvi.) is another insipid composition. The child stands on a stone between Joseph and Mary; the latter holds his hand anxiously as if doubtful whether he can stand alone. In Joseph's hand is a blossoming branch. Above the child's head flutters a dove; while in the clouds is the Almighty, bearing a crystal globe and surrounded by a company of insignificant cherubs. It is all very pretty, but very shallow. There is no new thought; nor even the new expression of an old thought; it is as the outer husk of the old thought from which the grain has been beaten.

Murillo's 'Guardian Angel,' from the





GIRL WITH AN APPLE

GIFU/L



Cathedral at Seville, is another of his popular pictures, and one which does work out an idea; yet not wholly an original idea, if the received interpretation of the work is correct. For it is generally accepted that the child is an embodied soul whose steps up the difficult road of life are watched over by a heavenly guardian, continually directing its gaze to a celestial destination.

No convent or church was considered furnished without a picture of the 'Immaculate Conception.' Murillo painted dozens, which imposed no very great strain on his creative faculty as an artist, and may possibly account for the lack of force in his other religious pictures, which were also multiplied in the same profuse fashion. Nevertheless, he shares with Velasquez the honours of Spanish art; their individuality brightened the whole of the seventeenth century.

About this time the French school of painting came into being; though until

the days of Watteau it was hardly distinct and original. In Italy and Spain the Church was responsible for the impulse and direction given to art ; in France the Court was the patron of painting, and the morals of the age were scarcely conducive to the appreciation of pictures which had for subjects the simplicity and innocence of childhood. In the early days of the French school the artists who painted children did not do so from choice, but at the order of their court patrons, who wished to preserve on canvas the features of their little sons or daughters. So we shall find portraits of little counts and high-born demoiselles dressed up in extravagant styles, and having few of the characteristics of childhood. Mignard, Le Brun, Rigaud, and others painted portraits of children, yet none of their productions were in sympathy with the child spirit. Two only, that of the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., and of his sister, Françoise Marie de Bourbon, are quite charming; the little girl in particular



THE MUSIC PARTY  
WATKINS



as she sits blowing bubbles with a romping puppy eager to snap at them.

Watteau, as we should expect, gives us little children of precisely the same type as his maturer figures. His genius was that of dainty colouring and form; beyond that it showed but little variety, and the children he shows us are worthy offspring of his men and women. Precocious and over-dressed they are for the most part, as the accompanying illustration will show (Plate XXVIII.). On the terrace, in the foreground, are seated two ladies listening to the strains of music which a gallant in front is extracting from a guitar. Behind, leaning on the back of their chairs, is another man, whose violoncello is lying at the ladies' feet. This group is completed by two children, veritable little fashion-plates, one of whom is carrying on a mild flirtation with the dog. A servant at the right of the picture is about to bring some cooling drink from the bottles which repose in a large bowl.

## 138 THE CHILD IN ART

Watteau frequently introduces children in his pictures, but they are all alike, and of this type; beautifully dressed, beautifully finished French dolls, just what we should expect. Another eighteenth-century artist has a pleasant surprise in store, and paints exactly what we should not expect. The reputation of Fragonard hardly leads us to suppose that if he undertook to paint childhood at all, his conception would be very ennobling. Yet none the less has he succeeded in producing a very charming open little face in the picture known as the 'Fair-haired Child'—a symphony in white, pink, and blue. The little boy's arms are closely folded, almost crushing the pink flowers he carries, and he looks out of the picture in a delightfully frank manner.

This, together with his other picture here reproduced, 'The Schoolmistress' (Plate xxix.), hangs in the Wallace Collection. The latter represents an infants'





THE SCHOLASTRESS  
DRAGONARD



school. Before the stern schoolmistress is a blackboard on which are written the letters of the alphabet. In front of this, and facing her, is a tiny child clothed only in an insufficient shirt. His little face is puckered in perplexity, he twists up the edge of his little shirt, and fidgets with his feet. In the hands of his teacher are a large loaf and a knife; perhaps she has told him to spell their names. In vain will the child seek inspiration from her forbidding face; any vague ideas he himself may have on the subject flee at the sound of titters from the children behind the blackboard. His other companions have finished their tasks and now play contentedly behind their teacher's back; but till this poor puzzled infant has given a satisfactory answer he may not join them. The huge cat purrs in supreme satisfaction with its surroundings, and furnishes another distraction to this baby who finds such concentrated effort rather too much for him. Another picture by Fragonard in the Wal-

lace Collection is 'A Study of a Young Girl,' though it might more appropriately be named 'A Young Girl Studying.' The same look of perplexity is perceptible on the child's face, which, though not pretty in the fashion of Greuze, is nevertheless full of expression and character.

'Assume a virtue if you have it not,' might be the motto of Greuze. He gives to his girls the features of children, but the attractive names, such as 'Innocence,' 'Modesty,' and so forth, are hardly borne out by the expressions which we read in the faces, expressions which cannot but belong to maturer years, and which we do not look for in the delineation of childhood. Had Greuze confined himself to the study and painting of babies, the probability is that in course of time they would have received at his hands precisely the same treatment as his older girls. The time in which he lived was against him. The essence of the child spirit was poisoned, nay, asphyxiated, by the moral and reli-



STUDY OF GRIEF

GRIGORIEV



gious atmosphere of the age. Take, for example, the 'Study of Grief' (Plate xxx.). The features are entirely those of a child; if we look at it for a moment without paying any attention to the expression, we shall find a perfect child's face, but the expression kills it, the attitude stamps the figure as unchildlike.

The 'Girl with an Apple' (Plate xxvii.), on the contrary, is a child; unlike the 'Study of Grief,' or the 'Broken Pitcher,' in which a child's head has been fitted on to the shoulders of a woman. Among all the thirty or forty single heads Greuze painted, this 'Girl with an Apple' is the only child, and is, furthermore, the most pleasing of his conceptions of childhood.

There are cottage interiors and domestic scenes, and various pictures in which a child figures, but though Greuze frequently made children the pretext for his pictures, they are very rarely the subject of them. Even though the title should lead us to

suppose it, the child is seldom the most prominent feature in the composition.

It has been noted that the manners and morals of the age did not make for the well-being of childhood in art. Yet among the puppets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there are some dainty, sprightly little creatures who remind us that childhood in the hands of certain artists of France was by no means entirely degraded. Some charming portraits exist, one of François-Louis Gounod, father of the composer, by Lépicié, and of the little Chevalier de Pange by Drouais. Both are lovely children, and each is every inch a gentleman. The ill-fated dauphin, son of Louis XVI., was painted by Latour and Madame Le Brun. Latour's is the portrait of the prince in court dress with powdered hair; Madame Le Brun's is the picture of the boy, his brown hair straightly brushed, his coat open at the throat and ruffled with white. Very pleasing also is her 'Portrait of a Boy in Red.' Mischief per-





MADAME LE BRUN AND HER DAUGHTER

MADAME LE BRUN



sonified is this little lad. His tightly fitting coat is of a beautiful shade of red, with white ruffles at the neck and wrists. He leans his left arm on the table before him, and turning round, looks up with the sauciest little smile.

The portrait of Madame Le Brun and her daughter is too well-known to need any words of description. There are two portraits in the Louvre of herself and her child; the accompanying reproduction is of the more popular and beautiful picture (Plate xxxi.). The tender pride on the mother's face, and the trust and confidence expressed in the child's attitude are beautifully rendered.

Other artists in the end of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries, notably Prud'hon and Delaroche, produced, if not the highest ideal of childhood, certainly very truthful pictures of children. What attractiveness there is in the delighted children in Prud'hon's picture, 'Puppies'! Who has not seen a

similar cloud on a child's face to that which Delaroche shows us in 'A Child Learning to Read'? (Plate xxxii.). The sulky little thing disregarding all its mother's coaxing efforts, while the other baby looks supremely uncomfortable holding the book which is nearly as big as itself.

A child's terror is no easy thing to represent, and Delaroche has painted it very successfully in his picture of 'The Little Princes in the Tower' (Plate xxxiii.). The reproduction here given is from the smaller version in the Wallace Collection; the larger picture is in the Louvre. The elder boy, Edward v., is sitting on the edge of a huge four-poster, the white draperies of which seem to attract the only rays of light in the gloomy apartment. Crouching against him is the little Duke of York, an open volume in his hands. Through the intense gloom at the left of the picture, at the level of the floor, comes a streak of light, seemingly from below the door; towards this a little dog runs barking.



A CHILD LEARNING TO READ

ETHIOPIA



The children, terror-stricken, glance apprehensively in either direction.

Like Richter in Germany, Edouard Frère loved childhood, and painted it in almost every aspect. One of the most sympathetic of artists, like his fellow-countryman Millet he painted the lives of peasants, and his children receive the same respectful treatment as Millet gives to his workers in the fields. The scenes he paints are every whit as simple and homely. A little brother and sister sitting side by side on a staircase, reading; a little girl standing on tiptoe on a cane-bottomed chair, taking down a small looking-glass which hangs almost out of her reach; a little group of children expectant of the midday meal which their widowed mother is preparing for them; some boys sliding on a slippery hillside; these are the scenes which Frère paints with a magic touch, and invests with a harmony undreamt of in the *fêtes champêtres* of Watteau and Lancret.

To come still nearer to our own times, Bouguereau's child pictures are some of the most beautiful in modern art. His Cupids are delightful, having all the most winning qualities of human children. The little creatures in his picture 'L'Assaut' are just little naked boys and girls with downy wings clustering round a pretty elder sister. The same may be said of the happy band who try to prevent the flight of an escaping nymph. They use every endeavour to compel her to stay, they flutter round her head and whisper entreaties in her ear; she laughingly raises her arms and bids them begone. In despair, Cupid raises his bow and tightens the string, another poises a dart above her dark hair, while a third flings himself on the ground before her, imprisoning her ankle in his dimpled hand and pressing her backwards.

How much more beautiful, too, than Greuze's personification of 'Innocence' is Bouguereau's picture bearing the same





THE LITTLE PRINCES IN THE TOWER  
BY ADOPH



name, of a maiden carrying in her arms a sleeping child and a lamb!

It was the dream of Bouguereau's youth to devote his life to religious painting. His Madonnas are well known in England, and are particularly beautiful. One of the most touching is 'La Vierge Consolatrice' (Plate xxxiv.). A mother in robes of mourning has come to cast her sorrow, her bruised and desolate heart, at the Virgin's feet. She flings herself on her knees, her hands twisted in supplication—for what? She hardly knows; her wound is too fresh for her prayers to be coherent. And the Madonna, whose own heart was pierced with the same sword, lifts her hands and eyes in prayer that this stricken mother may be comforted. At the Virgin's feet the mourner has laid the lifeless, rigid body of a little child—the child of whom Death the Reaper has robbed her. The flowers gathered by his hand lie scattered and withering on the steps, symbolic of her blighted hopes. But as the roses whose

petals droop and die will bloom afresh in fields of light, so will this little blossom, plucked up by the root from a mother's heart, grow to perfection in the garden whither he has been transplanted by the messenger of God.



LA VIERGE CONSOLATRICE

BOUGUEREAU



## CHAPTER VIII

IT is curious to notice that though it was to Christianity that the child owed its status in art, and though Italy was the first nation to bring this into prominence, it was not in the art of Italy that the conception of childhood reached its highest ideal. The perfection of the child-form was attained by Italian painters and sculptors; the perfection of child-character was exemplified by the artists of Holland. It remained for the British school to effect the union of the two.

Prior to the eighteenth century, a definitely British school can hardly be said to exist. There was the imported art of Holbein, Van Dyck, and Lely, but not until the days of Hogarth, who may be called the father of English painting, was

our national art thoroughly established as such. Hogarth was essentially not a painter of childhood, and to find any delineation of children we must turn to the portrait painters belonging to this century.

First in chronological order, first in order of merit, stands Sir Joshua Reynolds. His fame rests upon his portrait painting, and hardly less upon his portraiture of childhood. Indeed, it has been borne in upon the minds of many critics that we have to thank Sir Joshua for the creation of the child in art. Whether this statement is wholly or only partially true, it is certain that it was he who first raised childhood to its true level in art. ‘The childless man knew most of childhood, depicted its beauty in the truest and happiest spirit of comedy, entered into its changeful soul with the tenderest, heartiest sympathy, played with the playful, sighed with the sorrowful, and mastered all the craft of infancy.’<sup>1</sup> His

<sup>1</sup> F. G. Stephens, *English Children as Painted by Reynolds*. London, 1884.



children are never forced into unnatural poses; they are perfectly free from affectation or self-consciousness. A Reynolds child-portrait has the effect of a snap-shot in oil.

Take that of Miss Bowles, which may be seen in the Wallace Collection. The little girl is sitting on the ground with her arms clasped round her dog. A romp with the animal has resulted in the sudden over-balancing of the child, who drags him to the ground with her. The dog looks far from happy, but the child's face is lit up by a gleeful smile, as if she thoroughly enjoyed it. No doubt she did; for Sir Joshua was kindness itself to his little sitters. They possessed as great a charm for him as their portraits do for us. The father and mother of little Miss Bowles first decided to let the child sit to Romney for her portrait; however, on the advice of a friend, who assured them that even a faded picture by Reynolds would be the finest thing they could have, they invited Sir

Joshua to dine with them and make the acquaintance of the little girl. He did so, and so completely won her heart by the tricks and stories with which he amused her during dinner, that she thought him the kindest man in the world, and was delighted to be taken next day to his studio.

The delight of the Duchess of Devonshire's baby as it is danced up and down by its mother is another evanescent expression successfully imprisoned on the canvas; and with this and the laughter of Miss Bowles, the demure face of little Penelope Boothby forms a pretty contrast (Plate xxxv.). Her portrait shows her to be the quaintest little lady in a huge cap, cross-over bodice, and long mittens. Behind her delightful little air of solemnity there lurks a suspicion of merriment, and her mouth is compressed like a tiny rosebud in the effort to repress the smile which threatens to break out. Though not so well-known as many others of his portraits, this is one



MISS PENELOPE BOOTHBY  
REYNOLDS



of the most perfect child-faces from Sir Joshua's brush, and deserves to be classed among his masterpieces.

The three child-pictures most generally known are 'The Age of Innocence' (Frontispiece), 'The Infant Samuel,' and 'Heads of Angels' (Plate xxxvi.). These pictures alone would suffice to show what the joy and love in childhood, as inspired by the teaching of Christianity, has done for its delineation in art. No pagan age could have evoked 'The Age of Innocence.' No infant of heathenism could have been inspired with such simplicity and devotion as this child Samuel. 'I do not know,' writes Mr. Lecky to a friend, 'whether Reynolds' "Infant Samuel" is an original conception. If it is, I think it must be the one religious type in art which England has given to the world.' Then, again, where among the multitudes of cherubim which flood the skies of the Southern artists shall we find anything to equal, much less surpass those exquisite 'Angel Heads'? 'A final separa-

tion,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'from the Greek art, which can be proud in a torso without a head, is achieved by the master who paints for you five little girls' heads, without ever a torso.'<sup>1</sup> That they are far removed from Italian and Greek ideals is obvious. More than this, could we wish to see a more perfect illustration of the words 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven' than these lovely cherubs?

The children in these three pictures endear themselves to us by their attractiveness as children, and further by the underlying suggestion or thought. This last is entirely spontaneous, yet not obtrusive. We see at first glance, perhaps, nothing but the child itself, and fall in love with it immediately: then we realise that not only is it charming, considered in its human relations, but as the expression and conveyance of the most beautiful lessons of Christianity, it makes a deeper appeal to us. More particularly is this the case with 'The Age

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England*, p. 87.



HEADS OF ANGELS

RIVAOULT





of Innocence' and 'Heads of Angels.' Neither of these pictures was painted with the intent that it should preach or teach. Both are portraits; the first of Sir Joshua's great-niece, little 'Theophila Gwatkin; the latter of Frances, daughter of Lord William Gordon, and niece of Lord George Gordon, who inaugurated the 'No-Popery Riots.' Yet they make a more successful appeal to our deeper feelings than Reynolds' avowedly religious subjects. Take 'The Infant Samuel' and 'St. John in the Wilderness,' for instance. In these there is a distinct religious tone. The children, each a prophet, are earnestly devout; the one listening to the voice which calls him; the other proclaiming his message of the coming Redeemer. We cannot, like Sir Joshua's contemporaries, claim such ignorance as to ask, with them, who Samuel was. Still, it is proverbial that an Englishman does not wear his heart upon his sleeve; he will fight for, but he will not talk about, his

religious convictions. Is this perhaps the reason why we prefer the hidden meanings of 'The Age of Innocence' to the more apparent lessons of 'The Infant Samuel'?

The picture of 'St. John in the Wilderness,' which we reproduce (Plate xxxvii.), hangs in the Wallace Collection. It shows the Baptist seated on a stone, with a lamb beside him. The sunny light falls on his brown hair tinting it with gold, and on his uplifted hand. The cross is in his other hand, and his brown robe lies across his knee. Contrast Sir Joshua's treatment with Murillo's. Not only is Reynolds' picture more characteristic of the Baptist, but as a representation of childhood it is more beautiful.

Many critics, speaking generally, and comparing Reynolds' child-pictures with those by Gainsborough, have claimed the prize on behalf of the latter. Certainly he achieved great success in the painting of childhood, but whether he is considered superior to Sir Joshua in this respect is a



ST JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

REYNOLDS



matter of opinion and individual taste. For absolute truthfulness, his pictures of peasant children must rank above similar subjects by Reynolds. Reynolds' poor children are little ladies and gentlemen dressed in picturesque rags; Gainsborough's are real, sunburnt English cottagers. A characteristic picture is in the National Gallery; it is variously named 'Country Children,' or 'Rustic Children,' and represents two little girls and a boy. The latter is seated on a bank, holding an armful of sticks. Beside him stands the elder sister with the baby of the party in her arms, while in the distance, at the foot of the hill, lies their cottage home. These are quite poor children, accustomed to run about without shoes and stockings, and living a free open-air life. Whether out in the fields, gathering round the cottage doorway, or enjoying the warmth of the blazing faggot-fire at nightfall, these children are painted with an intimate sympathy, and there is something more winning about

them than about many of Gainsborough's more aristocratic sitters. The cluster of children in the picture of 'The Cottage Door' is endowed with far more charm than are those in the large canvas representing the Baillie family, and many more instances might be cited to show that though Gainsborough was aware that the dignity of childhood was the same in all walks of life, and though he painted all children with the same reverence and care, yet there is a brightness and freshness about his little gipsies which the others frequently lack.

This is evinced more particularly by one of Gainsborough's most famous pictures, 'The Blue Boy.' Though the subject of it can only by a stretch of the imagination be called a child, he certainly does not exhibit the quality of brightness which is so characteristic of Gainsborough's little peasants. His face, an old one on young shoulders, is serious, almost stern. Though but a lad of about fifteen, his expression is



THE BLUE BOY

GAINSBOROUGH





unchildlike. The picture, which shows Gainsborough's admiration for Van Dyck, portrays Master Jonathan Buttall dressed in a blue silk suit, holding his plumed hat in his hand. It is said to have been painted in defiance of the dictum of Sir Joshua Reynolds, then President of the Royal Academy, that cold colours, such as blue, should not predominate in a picture. A slight discrepancy between the dates of the painting of the picture, and the occasion when Reynolds made this statement, has caused this to be doubted. The picture has been copied several times, possibly on account of the discussion, and many persons have claimed to possess the original, which, however, belongs to the Duke of Westminster.

One great difference between Reynolds and Gainsborough in their painting of childhood lies in this fact, while in Reynolds' pictures our attention is riveted on the child's face, its action, or attitude; in Gainsborough's portraits of little ladies and

gentlemen, though we look at the children themselves, we also cast an approving glance at their clothes. The dresses worn by Reynolds' children pass, and will pass, unnoticed, whatever the age and whatever the fashion. Gainsborough's children are carefully, even beautifully, dressed in the fashion of their day. They look as though their nursery-maid was always on the watch, straightening a ribbon or smoothing a curl; in short, as though they never trusted themselves outside the park palings. 'Miss Haverfield,' in the Wallace Collection, and the 'Family of Mr. J. Baillie,' in the National Gallery, are examples of this. It must not be thought, however, that this is characteristic of all Gainsborough's child pictures. His little gipsies were probably never inside the park palings in their lives; and another illustration of his painting of childhood, 'The Painter's Daughters,' is the picture of his own very nice little girls, the elder of whom looks as though she

were capable of taking care of herself and her small sister without the assistance of a nursery-maid. She is perhaps two years older than the little one, who has caught sight of a butterfly, and starts towards it. She is checked by her sister's detaining hand. The latter looks a little wistfully at the butterfly, as though she would thoroughly enjoy a chase after it, and is only deterred by the sense of responsibility for her little sister, and perhaps the thought that if they linger they may be late for tea. These are not pretty children; but they are simple and unaffected, not dependent for their attractiveness upon frocks and frills, and quite free from self-consciousness.

If it is a hard matter to choose between Reynolds and Gainsborough for the best delineation of childhood, the introduction of another competitor for fame, Romney, makes choice no easier. Each of the trio gives us something different, and the work of each is equally worthy of our admiration. Add to these the names of Lawrence,

Hoppner, and sundry other artists of their era, and our task is made still more difficult. The exquisite grace of Romney, the purity of Hoppner, the winsome vivacity of Lawrence, all appeal to us as much as does the expressiveness of Reynolds or the variety of Gainsborough.

Romney's group of dancing children is said to be the finest group of portraits by his brush, and well deserves this praise. About the truth of the likenesses we cannot judge, but those who have seen the picture will remember that the children are almost perfect, ideally beautiful and natural. They are the daughters and little son of the second Earl Gower, afterwards first Marquis of Stafford. The tall figure on the right with the tambourine is that of their half-sister, Lady Anne, who married the Rev. Edward Vernon-Harcourt, afterwards Archbishop of York. The little boy peeping through the middle of the group became in later life British Ambassador at St.



PLAYMATES  
ROMNEY



Petersburg. The little girls, taking them from right to left, grew up and married, becoming respectively Duchess of Beaufort, Lady Susanna Harrowby, and Lady Georgiana Eliot.

Another lovely group by Romney, which unfortunately we cannot reproduce, is that of Lady Warwick and her children. The lady, dressed in white satin, is seated with her right arm round her little daughter's waist. She looks out of the picture as though watching the spectator; so does the little boy, who stands apart from his mother and sister, with a hoop in his hand. The most charming figure in the group is that of the little girl. She stands by her mother, looking up into her face in a coaxing fashion. Her cap falls back from her sunny curls, and she is one of the prettiest little maidens in the realm of art. Very charming also is the little girl in 'Play-mates' (Plate xxxix.), who clasps in her arms a tiny spaniel, while her brother holds two other dogs in a leash; and another

wonderfully attractive little maid is to be seen in the National Gallery in the picture called 'A Lady and Child.'

These four pictures may be said to represent Romney's treatment of childhood, though there are many others, which might interpret his thoughts on this subject just as well. In his day Romney rivalled Reynolds, but he was not so essentially the friend of childhood. Though he looked on children as pretty, graceful little beings, he did not enter into every changeful mood, every passing fancy that Reynolds found so full of fascination. This may also be said of Hoppner and Lawrence. The former's picture, 'Love me, love my dog' has not the same child-spirit that we find in Reynolds' 'Miss Bowles.' The little girl with her arm thrown over the dog's back is not thoroughly at home; she is posing for the picture and wondering whether she is smiling too much or too little. The charming 'Children Bathing,' a picture





PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

LAWRENCE



of Hoppner's own three laddies, is, on the contrary, a veritable snapshot. Two of the little boys are seated by the edge of a shallow stream. The younger is looking doubtfully at the water, and pulling his arm reluctantly out of his sleeve. The other child is stripped ready for the plunge, and looks up with a mischievous laugh at his eldest brother, who still hesitates to undress and stands by in an undecided fashion.

Another portrait group by Hoppner represents 'The Douglas Children,' three little girls and a boy in a landscape flecked with sunshine. The eldest girl and the boy wear expressions of solemn amazement; the second girl looks with some amusement at the youngest, who evidently does not enjoy the process of having her portrait painted, and crouches sulkily against her eldest sister's knee. The sunlight filters through the branches above their heads, and glitters on their hair.

Both these pictures show Hoppner's ability in painting childhood to which, even if he did not treat it with much originality, is given as much care and attention as were bestowed on his portraits of fashionable beauties.

Many of Lawrence's most famous pictures are portraits of children. The lovely laughing Princess Charlotte with her bird perching on the hand she raises above her head (Plate XL.); the handsome seven-year-old boy, Master Lambton (Plate XLII.); the beautiful Countess Gower, afterwards Duchess of Sutherland, and her little daughter—all these are characteristic and well-known examples of Lawrence's art. The picture he himself wished to be known by is the portrait of the Calmady children, which has been engraved under the title 'Nature' (Plate XLI.). At the time when he painted this, his terms ranged from 150 to 600 guineas for a single portrait. Two heads in one frame increased the price by two-thirds, so the



NATURE  
LAWRENCE



charge would have been in this case 250 guineas. Knowing, however, that the Calmady's' means were small, Lawrence asked only 200. At the mention of this sum, Mrs. Calmady's face fell, whereupon the artist, without waiting for her to say a word, said: 'Well, well, say 150 for the two little heads in a circle, and some sky—and finish it at once.' The result is his most charming picture of childhood. During the painting of it he frequently remarked that 'it would be the best piece of the kind he had ever painted'; and on its completion he had no hesitation in saying it was his best picture—one of the few he would wish hereafter to be known by.

Though this is one of Lawrence's most beautiful pictures of childhood, it is not altogether his most characteristic. Lawrence had been an infant prodigy, and consequently a 'show' child. His tendency was to make the children he painted 'show' children also. 'Master Lambton'

is one of these, and so is the 'Child with a Kid,' which is a portrait of Lady Georgiana Fane at the age of five. Master Lambton is undoubtedly a handsome boy, but who would take him for a child of seven? No boy of his age would pose in quite such a theatrical manner; nor would he climb to his perch on a rock without considerable damage to his velvet suit. The affectation in the 'Child with a Kid,' though it takes a different form, is just as remarkable. The little girl is standing on the sloping bank of a streamlet, while the kid paddles about in the water at her side. Near her stands a tub full of clothes, and the child herself is dressed as scantily as the poorest peasant child. A title does not necessarily imply wealth, but presumably Lady Georgiana's parents could afford to give her sufficient clothing. We can scarcely believe that Lawrence ever saw her running about out of doors in such a costume as she wears in the picture. Nevertheless she is





MASTER LAMBTON  
TAWKINCL



a very pretty little girl; and though most of Lawrence's child-pictures are characterised by a certain amount of affectation, many of the children themselves are very beautiful and full of life.

A number of other names will spring to our minds as those of artists who painted childhood with more or less success. Etty, Northcote, and indeed all the painters of this era, found this subject full of attraction; but the artists with whom we have already dealt stand unrivalled by any of their contemporaries as delineators of the grace of infancy. Their pictures furnish abundant evidence of the high place held by childhood in art. Formerly the subject of poetic idealism, childhood was at this time painted for its own sake; in various aspects and varying moods it became the favourite theme of English artists. Reynolds and his contemporaries had set the fashion—a fashion which, as we shall see, shows no sign of changing.

## CHAPTER IX

YET not in pictures alone do we find these charming examples of babyhood. We search among long galleries of Greek sculpture for that which in British plastic art readily claims our notice. The soft outlines of the child-form, the round limbs and changeful expression, have inspired creations of the sculptor as well as the painter. Imprisoned in stone by the hand of Chantrey, two lovely children lie sleeping in Lichfield Cathedral; forming a monument, not only to the children, but to the skill and sympathy of the artist who with a wonderful instinct could make even Death's darkness beautiful.

As in painting and sculpture, so in all kinds of design are we confronted with

children. As represented by Flaxman and the poet-painter Blake, they are dainty little beings, losing none of their childishness through being used to express poetic ideals. Every page of the *Songs of Innocence*—songs which breathe the quaint wonderings of childhood in an exquisite fashion—is decorated with tiny elflike boys and girls to illustrate the verses. Little fairy creatures flit about the margins, and play hide-and-seek among the headlines. Then we come upon more deliberate pictures of children, akin to those from Flaxman's pencil; little groups sketched with an intimate knowledge of child character, and endowed with an enduring charm. Side by side with Flaxman and Blake we must place Stothard, whose delineations of childhood are always delightful. A modern writer, speaking of Stothard's picture, 'Cupids preparing for the Chase,' says: 'See the fresh vivacity of this Cupid sounding his horn; the earnest and boyish sturdiness

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of the little fellow with his long staff behind him; the grip which the curly-headed boy in front has of the dog's neck—it is all bold, simple, and alive: while in the city, on a hill in the distance, is the touch of poetic colour and mysterious suggestion that lifts the whole scene into the region of romance.' Stothard calls these Cupids, but they are just a group of jolly little English children masquerading, if you will, under the name. For Cupid does not thrive in British art. He ekes out a miserable existence on drop-scenes and various decorations of the kind; his place in true art is amply filled with real children who smile happily from the canvas of every artist.

Three of lesser note may be singled out for their pictures of childhood. Westall, with his delightful portrait of Philip Sanson when a child; Hilton, a Rubenesque painter, with his allegorical 'Nature Blowing Bubbles for her Children' (Plate XLIII.);



NATURE BLOWING BUBBLES FOR HER CHILDREN  
MILTON





and Richard Parkes Bonington, with a scene entitled 'Henri iv. and the Spanish Ambassador.' The first of these is the portrait of a baby about two years old; he stands on the garden path in front of a rosebush, his arms full of flowers, and stretches out his little hand to pick a rose. It is quite a simple and therefore charming picture. Hilton's gives more scope for our imagination. He paints Nature with her youngest babe lying on the ground near a spring of water, and blowing bubbles which her children try to catch; some run after them; some raise their hands to try and stop their upward flight. It is an illustration of Crabbe's lines:—

' Blow sportive bladders in the beamy sun,  
And call them worlds! And bid the greatest  
show  
More radiant colours in their worlds below :  
Then as they break, the slaves of care reprove,  
And tell them, such are all the toys they love.'

Bonington's 'Henri iv. and the Spanish Ambassador' is wonderfully vivid and full

of life. The picture represents the King in the act of creeping under the table in order to escape from the onslaught of three excited children. The little one in front has seized the blue ribbon from which a star, presumably an order, depends, and vainly tries to stop his retreat. Not the least riotous member of the party is the dog, who seems thoroughly to enjoy the romp. By the window stands the Spaniard, looking on with amazement and not a little contempt for the monarch who, whatever he might do in private life, could so far forget his dignity as to behave in this fashion before the representative of a neighbouring country. Yet this was quite in keeping with the character of Henri iv. Michelet, in his account of Henri iv.'s entry into Paris in 1598, tells us: '*Le roi était si joyeux qu'il se contenait à peine. Comme on vint au Louvre lui parler d'affaires, "Je suis enivré," dit-il. "Je ne sais ce que vous dites, ni ce que je dois vous dire."* On s'étonna de lui voir



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contrefaire comme un bouffon le noble et triste salut du duc de Feria.'<sup>1</sup>

Other painters of childhood are Wilkie and Webster. Neither of these artists depicted pretty children, nor did they confine their ideas on childhood to the most pleasing aspect of the subject. In common with almost all his other pictures, Wilkie's 'Blind Fiddler' (Plate XLIV.) contains several figures of children, and it is interesting to note his treatment of them. In the arms of the woman nearest to the musician is a sleeping babe unaffected by the music. The two little people in the middle of the room, on the contrary, watch the blind man with amazement. The younger child, though still fingering the strings attached to her toy wagon, has lost all her interest in the plaything and stares at him open-mouthed. The laughing, crowing child on its mother's knee seems dancing up and down with delight, and ready to accept

<sup>1</sup> Michelet, *Histoire de France*. Paris, 1879. Vol. xii., p. 338.

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the burly farmer's invitation to try her unsteady steps upon the cottage floor. The least pleasing of the children in the composition is the boy to the right of the picture with his tongue out. He stands behind his mother's chair, has picked up the poker, and, holding the bellows under his chin, proceeds to mimic the blind fiddler.

In Webster's 'Dame School' are several mischievous boys of this type. The whole picture is characteristic. The morning sunshine has tempted two or three to dawdle on their way to school, and they come creeping in, hoping to escape notice. Sitting on benches all along the walls, and in the middle of the schoolroom, are idle little scholars. One boy points and makes faces at the teacher; another munches an apple under cover of his book. A big boy in a smock stands studying his lesson, whilst a little fellow behind him seizes and pulls at a tape which projects from his collar. This causes extreme delight to his companions, who are ready to welcome the

slightest diversion. Sitting back to back on a stool in the middle of the room are two children, a little girl pretending to learn her lesson, and a boy with no intention of keeping up such a farce; he leans his chin on the edge of his book, and occupies himself putting his tongue out at his schoolfellows. At a table near the window sits the schoolmistress, hearing the lessons of one of the older boys. He scratches his head in utter perplexity; the promptings of his companion who stands behind with the book in his hand are of no avail. The only child in the room who is really busy is the little girl near the window, whose attention is wholly absorbed in threading a needle; all the others are infected by a spirit of laziness and mischief. The scene is probably truthful enough; we might find a similar throng similarly employed in any small village school on a hot summer's day.

It is not the most pleasing presentment of childhood, perhaps we might say, but.

after all, real children are not at all times little angels of goodness. Furthermore, Wilkie and Webster stand for a period of reaction ; when, after the grace and beauty of the child had been depicted by the eighteenth and early nineteenth century artists, the painting of childhood became general, and all aspects of the subject were portrayed. Mr. Ruskin calls this, *more suo*, ‘an extremely dark period,’ caused by ‘the terrible action of our wealth, compelling our painters to represent the children of the poor as in wickedness and misery.’<sup>1</sup> But this did not continue for long, and so bright are the periods preceding and following it, that we scarcely remember such a time of darkness ever existed. That childhood has regained its place of honour is evinced by its representation by modern artists. Whether children are taken ‘naturally as what they are, or artificially as types and figures of something which they are not,’ they make

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England* (1887).





HIS FIRST OFFENCE  
LADY SEANIN



an irresistible appeal to us. We look at the life of the streets, at the children of poverty, as painted by Lady Stanley and others, and however much we may feel them to be unlovable, we are convinced that they are true and therefore pitiable. Look at the ragged little urchin in the dock (Plate xlv.), his shifty eyes scanning with a furtive eagerness the faces of those around him. It is his first offence, and, though he is only a street arab, he awakens our sympathy just as readily as does the little lady in Briton Riviere's picture 'Sympathy'. She has been banished from the drawing-room for some childish fault and sits disconsolate upon the staircase. Her blue eyes are full of tears, and she takes no notice of the sympathetic terrier who lays his head confidently on her shoulder. All the world seems dark to this little maid; she is too sick at heart to appreciate the comfort offered by her dumb friend, but he will wait there patiently till his little mistress gives him a kiss—the signal that she has

banished her troubles and is ready to seek admission at the door behind her. We might meet with these children in everyday life, and they arouse our deepest interest.

We should like to join the two little girls in Sargent's 'Carnation Lily, Lily Rose' (Plate XLVI.), as they stand in the twilight among tangled masses of carnations and lilies, lighting Chinese lanterns which they hang on the rose bushes round them; and we could share with equal enjoyment the fascinating occupation of the little lad, whom Millais has depicted blowing bubbles. Is not our curiosity aroused to learn the fate of the baby in Millais' picture of 'A Flood'? We see a vast tract of water, and floating in the foreground a wooden cradle. Its little occupant is unconscious of any danger, but the black kitten on the prow of this strange vessel yells with discomfort and fright. Will these little wayfarers ever be picked up, we wonder! and we even glance over the rest of the picture hoping that a



CARNATION THEY, THEY ROSE  
COT



rescuing party may be in sight. Is not our sympathy awakened by the patience of the little maid listening to her first sermon? and how readily we feel with the child when we see in the companion picture that half-way through the second, her head has dropped forward and she is dreaming of things easier to understand than the preacher's discourse (Plate XLVII.).

What Richter was to the child in German art, and Frère to the child in the art of France, was Arthur Stocks to the child in English art. Millais, who is almost unrivalled in contemporary art for his painting of childhood, would still have been accounted great had he never painted a child. Stocks' reputation rests almost entirely on his wonderful delineation of childhood. His love for children led him to paint them with the same sympathy as did Richter or Frère; like these, too, his models were little ones of the poorer classes. Sweet shy little maids with whom he had made friends, and who had learned

to love and trust him; sturdy eager boys like the lad in one of his larger pictures, 'Soldiers Past and Future,' where the veteran of many campaigns lives over again his experiences as the child reads aloud stories of the battlefield. Stocks knew the heart of a child and how to reach it; without which knowledge none can be a true painter of childhood. Many have painted children without it, and so have failed to make a lasting appeal to the dormant child-spirit which lies somewhere in each grown-up heart; but with Millais' children we are babies again, as with those of Reynolds and others of his time. We feel ourselves part owners of the little shell which the children in Poynter's 'Outward Bound' have launched upon the deep. These two charming little girls are perched upon a projecting ledge of rock. One leans over the edge to watch the progress of the fragile craft which boasts a feather for its sail; the other sits twisting up her curly hair and tucking it under her





1. FOND JAPON

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red cap. Around them lie some little shells and various Oriental-looking draperies, while on a rock below reposes some fishing-tackle.

All these pictures of which we have spoken are full of interest to us, and half their charm lies in the perfect simplicity of subject. The children seem to live and breathe and act as they would in real life; we can almost fancy that we have met them there. Have we not seen many a cottage such as La Thangue shows us in 'The Man with the Scythe'? (Plate XLVIII.). This picture represents a perfectly simple scene, and all the actors are such as we might meet with in any village.

The little invalid child has been carried outside the cottage door and propped up by a cushion in the big chair, that she may enjoy the fresh air without fatigue. The anxious mother leaves her work occasionally and comes to look at the child. Towards sunset a labourer, returning from his day's work, passes the garden gate and

looks in at the little sufferer. His smock is flung over his shoulder like a shroud and he grasps a sickle in his hand—symbolic, perhaps, of the relentless reaper, Death. At this moment the mother comes out, and seeing the child's drooping head, bends over it in sudden fear. The little life has passed; another flower has been added to the eternal harvest, the happiness of which is in part foreshadowed by Holman Hunt's 'Triumph of the Innocents.'

This picture represents the Flight into Egypt, under starry skies and through fields of corn. On the distant hills watch-fires are burning, warning Joseph, who looks anxiously round, that their pursuers are still vigilant. The fugitives are crossing a narrow stream, on the further side of which are several of the little martyrs. Another group of children surrounds the ass and its foal, and to them the child Christ turns with a smile of welcome. In his hand are some ears of corn typical of the Bread of Life, or bearing allusion to



THE END



the pretty legend in connection with the Flight. The story runs that as the Holy Family passed through a field on the way to Egypt, some men were sowing it with wheat. Joseph instructed them that if Herod's soldiers should come and inquire at what time the fugitives had passed that way, they should answer, 'While we were sowing this corn.' The soldiers came shortly afterwards, but the corn had grown up so miraculously that they turned back thinking pursuit useless. Behind the Virgin and Child are two or three of the Innocents, who have not yet awakened to the joy of resurrection and still bear on their features traces of the agony of their martyrdom; unlike a child in the central group, who looks at the sword-rent in his little shirt and seems surprised to find no corresponding wound in his body. He and his little companions dance along with happiness; while the foremost group of Innocents is animated by a graver joy. The picture is one of radiant gladness.

Though we know these children to be little angels, we cannot forget that they were once real children ; though we feel them to be children, we are reminded by the symbolism in which the picture is rich, that they are also types. In none of the Italian pictures do we meet with quite the same thought. The Italian cherubs come of another race. Types they may be, but of some purified souls, not of happy innocent children who have entered into possession of their heavenly heritage. They have known no other occupation, have had no more human interest than their singing of psalms.

Yet though these Italian cherubs sink into comparative insignificance beside the hundreds of children in British art, they are of some importance in their national art as illustrating the treatment of childhood by the Italian painters. It is first through pictures of the Christ child, and secondly through the attendant cherubim, that we have been able to trace the slowly



changing thoughts of the Southern mind concerning childhood. We have watched the development of the child-form in Italian art, from a mere puppet to a creation of great beauty, but it has been mainly through examples of the Holy Family, through crowds of little angels, and their distant relative Cupid, that we have followed the gradual change. Crossing the Alps, we have found a wider range of subject and a wholly different style of art. Unhandicapped by the tyranny of tradition, the Dutch and Flemish artists painted children as they saw them in real life, and we have seen how much more true to the child-spirit are their pictures than those of the Italians, who had to fight their way from the ideal type to the freedom of reality. The Northern artists cared not so much for the actual prettiness of childhood as for the infinite amount of character and individuality lying undeveloped in every child; to portray this was their chief aim in painting children, and admirably have

they succeeded. We have found in Spanish art two distinct lines of thought: one, as represented by Murillo, being akin to the Italian ideals; the other, as developed by Velasquez, having more affinity with those of Flanders. The child in art was moulded by the first into a phantom, or a human monkey; by the second into a being of character, though of considerably less charm than when painted by Flemish artists. Neither treatment was entirely satisfactory. Even greater disappointment first met us in French art. We have seen the little fashion-plates of Watteau, and noticed the development, in spite of many impediments, of a nobler conception of childhood.

But we have searched the chief schools of art, and failed to find a child that completely satisfies our ideal. One more avenue lies open to us. The art of England supplies the object of our search. The beauty of Italian babyhood and the gradually unfolding character of the Dutch



GOING TO YOUR FISHING?



children are united in perfect harmony in the pictures of little English boys and girls. Whether they are children of the eighteenth century, or of the present day, they concentrate in themselves the truest beauty of form and character. This essence of perfect childhood we have found first in the pictures by Reynolds. Nor in our own day has the harmonious ideal been lost, and the portrayal of childhood in its innocence and simplicity is still one of the glories of British art.

If, in the eighteenth century, Reynolds was the principal exponent of the sweetness and dignity of childhood, the climax, in our own times, has been reached by the treatment of Watts. We may admire the dainty little Cupid intent on his occupation of fishing in the dancing wavelets, (Plate XLIX.), and fully appreciate the tenderness with which he paints a sweet sleeping baby, but there is a message in his child pictures, in addition to the innocence common to the children of Reynolds. Not

content with merely painting the perfect physical child, Watts makes the child become the embodiment of an ideal, foreshadowing in its undeveloped form the renewal of hope and life ; as in ' Promises,' in which picture the flowers of spring and the bud of humanity suggest the full significance of the title.

Even in the presence of Death this prophetic vision concerning childhood loses none of its truth and comfort. It seems a contradiction to recall the figure of Love vainly striving to bar out Death, and ' the silent angel of pity ' crowning Innocence ere the frosts have blighted or the sun has scorched the tender purity of infancy : yet to the weary scientist, resting in his chair with all the symbols of life's interests around him, there comes the Messenger (Plate L.) bearing a little child and bringing its twofold message. The unsatisfied student is assured that in future generations, as personified in the child, his dreams for science and art will reach fulfilment ;







to the man's heart comes the echo of the words, ever old and ever new: 'Except ye become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.'



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